

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**INVESTIGATING A MALE-DOMINATED SPACE: A  
STUDY OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE  
CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN PIETERMARITZBURG,  
SOUTH AFRICA**

By

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the degree of**

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**School of Management, IT and Governance**

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**2015**

# DECLARATION

I, Evelyn Omayemi Aneke declare that

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- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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I acknowledge many others also.

Thank you.

# **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to the following:

In loving memory of my beloved parents, Mr. Louis Usifoh Aneke & Mrs. Catherine  
Dada Aneke who gave me life and sowed the seed of education in my life.

To my brothers, sisters and in-laws.

Rev. Fr. Kris Aneke MSP, Ban Aneke, Gina Aneke, Sir & Lady Phil Udeh KSC,

Mr. & Mrs. Solomon Aneke, Louis Jnr. Aneke and Cyril Aneke.

## **ABSTRACT**

The potential of the South African economy to achieve desired growth is greatly hampered by the systematic exclusion of women entrepreneurial activity in the key industries that drive the economy. One such industry is the construction industry that contributes positively to the South African's economy. Yet, this industry is highly male-dominated. Despite seeming improvements in women's entrepreneurial participation in different industries, there is still a yawning gap between the percentages of men and women in the construction industry, particularly in terms of entrepreneurship. The construction industry has remained largely closed to women entrepreneurs and posing overwhelming challenges to the few women who have found their way into the industry. This study explores these challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. The study adopts a descriptive as well as an exploratory approach. This study is mainly qualitative with a small section of quantitative data used to triangulate and deepen the understanding of women's experience investigated. The snowball sampling technique was deployed in identifying the research participants, which is under the Non-probability sampling technique. In-depth interviews are conducted amongst sixteen (16) women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry. Data collected was analysed thematically. Themes that emerged from the analysis of data are presented and discussed under relevant headings formulated from specific research objectives. The study revealed that the desire to empower themselves and other women is a strong motivation for establishing small businesses in the construction industry. Most participants believed that women in the construction industry are unique and different from women in other industries and are further strengthened by the construction environment. The study also suggest that women face primarily socio-cultural challenges, particularly patriarchal attitudes, in the construction industry both at start-up and later stages of their businesses. Other key challenges were financial, productivity and promotion related. In addition, partnering with men, developing a good support system. Further still, participants are aware of external support initiatives and have benefited from them, but they are unanimous in pointing to the need for more publicity. Thus, policy makers need to be aware of the specific challenges, motivation and needs of women entrepreneurs in specific industries so as to produce policies accordingly. Such policies for construction industries, need to take the socio-cultural issue of male dominance seriously and offer means to a balance

by granting more women awareness, access and helping them establish and sustain their businesses. It is recommended that, similar research should be carried out in more provinces in South African since a literature gap exists. These studies could assist policy makers in deeper understanding of the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the construction industry.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

<b>BBBEE</b>	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
<b>CIDB</b>	Construction Industry Development Board
<b>DTI</b>	Department of Trade and Industry
<b>EOC</b>	Equal Opportunity Commission
<b>GEM</b>	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Office
<b>PCC</b>	Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce
<b>SAMAF</b>	South Africa Micro-finance Apex Fund
<b>SAWEN</b>	South Africa Women Entrepreneurs' Network
<b>SAWIC</b>	South Africa Women in Construction
<b>SEDA</b>	Small Enterprise Development Agency
<b>SMME</b>	Small Micro Medium Enterprise
<b>TWIB</b>	Technology for Women in Business
<b>WED</b>	Women Entrepreneurship Development
<b>WOESA</b>	Women in Oil and Energy Sector South Africa

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION FOR STUDY**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide background information about the research study. Furthermore, this chapter introduces the various sections of this dissertation such as the introduction, background and context of study, problem statement, research objectives and questions, motivation for study, and also the limitations of this dissertation.

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Gender equality has been an aspiration for most sections of modern society, however discrimination based on one's gender remains to be an issue (Valji, 2007:3). This is because the pervasiveness of gender inequality, which is reflected in almost every sphere of human existence is not equalled by any other form of domination and discrimination (Valji, 2007:3) as is evident in many social, political and economic sectors. In its annual report about women and men in Britain, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) (1998:2) affirms that "women continue to be significantly underrepresented in the primary sector (Agriculture, energy and water), in manufacturing, transport and communication and in particular in the construction industry (EOC, 1998:2; Adogbo *et al.*, 2015:100). While this report focuses on Britain, its findings represent a global trend (Agapiou, 2002; Lingard and Lin, 2004; Areniu *et al.*, 2005). Other than being an issue of justice and equality (Wollack, 2010:2); it also reduces gravely the potential of these sectors. This is because women have been shown to be very resourceful and to possess skills and abilities that make them inevitably valuable as entrepreneurs in the development of the economy and other sectors (Wollack, 2010:2). Entrepreneurship and the development of women are therefore, essential aspects of human resource and managerial development.

Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in the development of any nation (Hussain, Millman and Matlay, 2007:584; Ibrahim and Lucky, 2014:203). The significance of entrepreneurship is, indeed, seen in all walks of life, in the development of members of society and of the nation (Katsikis and Kyrgidou, 2009:209). Therefore, the promotion of entrepreneurship is necessary



for the growth of any economy (Hussain, and Matlay, 2007:487; Ibrahim and Lucky, 2014:203).

According to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2012), there are fewer women engaging in entrepreneurial activity than men. The gender gap is not as disturbing as the foregoing statistic would imply as about 52% of men are engaging in the entrepreneurial activities compared to 48% of women (GEM, 2012). Some studies advocate that in the creation of new businesses women have overtaken the men (Minniti and Naudé, 2010:1). However this varies from country to country (Vossenbergh, 2013:2). According to GEM (2010), as recently as 2010, Ghana was the only economy with a higher amount of female entrepreneurs – at about 55% - when compared to males (45%) (Vossenbergh, 2013:2).

The most radical feminist theory and other feminist expressions seek to address these inequalities and enhance women's chances and their ability to participate and contribute to society even in sectors that were traditionally deemed to belong only to men (Wollstonecraft, 2010:20). Within this framework, this dissertation focused on the construction industry as a traditionally male-dominated industry, which has not had much investigation of gender imbalance (Kirkwood, 2009:34).

The study sought to develop an in-depth understanding of the experience of women entrepreneurs who have established small businesses within the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. It paid close attention to the personal, social and other factors that motivated these women to become entrepreneurs in the industry despite it being heavily dominated by men. It investigated how women are able to navigate this male-dominated space in order to successfully (or otherwise) run their business, the challenges they experience at start-up and later stages of their businesses and such as managing to both care for their families' needs and run the business.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF STUDY

Several studies have shown that construction sites are very competitive places and the reluctance of men to accept women on the sites is conspicuous. One of the first studies investigating women in construction was carried out by Sommerville *et al.* (1993:289). This study argued that even though women can do the same jobs as their male counterparts, they are still underrepresented in the construction industry. There are various barriers that women when venturing into the construction industry face, although there are countless opportunities for women in the construction sector (Sommerville *et al.*, 1993:289). Although these studies were carried out in the early nineties, anecdotal evidence suggests that construction, as an industry, does not have a good track record when it comes to equal opportunity and it continues to suffer underrepresentation and discrimination particularly when it comes to women entrepreneurs (Toor and Ofori, 2010:1; Thayaparan *et al.*, 2014:online).

When joining the construction industry women entrepreneurs are going into gender-atypical occupational areas (Davey and Davidson, 2000; Hakim, 2000; Lawson, 2004; Martin, 2004; Simpson, 2004; Williams, 2004; Nentwich and Kelan, 2014:126). However, the problems within the male dominated industries are substantially different from those found within female-dominated or gender mixed industries (Martin, 2004:27; McKee, 2014:168). Men are more inclined to use power and resources in enforcing ideologies, and there are discriminatory laws and policies in a male-dominated industry (Martin, 2004:27; McKee, 2014:168). Women entrepreneurs in most construction sites are disrespected and intimidated by their male counterparts, perhaps because there are a larger number of male professionals in the field (Martin, 2004:27).

The entry of women entrepreneurs into the civil engineering profession is slow compared to that of medicine and law, which of late have had an increase in the number of women. In other words, there are more women studying medicine and law than men (Watts, 2009:38). The civil engineering profession is numerically and culturally male dominated with women constituting no more than 5% of the total (Watts, 2009:39). However certain exemplary strategies employed to address this gender imbalance have proven very successful (Badekale, 1994:5; Walton *et al.*, 2015:468). Research, for instance, shows the number of women studying engineering courses has increased, and this has gained significant publicity for the initiative (Gale, 1994:3;

Powell *et al.*, 2009:411). This has increased the level of women participation in the engineering industry (Gale, 1994:3; Powell *et al.*, 2009:411).

A large body of literature asserts that most construction industries continue to be male dominated and that of all the major industrial groups the construction industry is the second most male dominated industry in the world (Fielden *et al.* 2000:114; Menches and Abraham, 2007:702; Mathur-Helm, 2011:339; English and Hay, 2015:145). Apart from the fact that 84% of its workers are male, the research also appears to exhibit that the greatest degree of vertical segregation is by gender (Fielden *et al.*, 2010:115; English and Hay, 2015:145). Fielden *et al.* (2000:114) also argues that in 1996 43% of women were employed in part-time positions compared with only 2% of men who dominate the full time positions.

Another survey shows that women are still just not employed in the construction industry, according to Court and Morale cited in (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2006:559) “less than 7% of full time construction industry workforces in Britain were women”. In a more recent survey, statistics show that the representation of women is still low with only 6.7% of the workforce being women (Jaafar *et al.*, 2014:4) Buttressing this further, Fielden *et al.* (2000:116) went on to say that women’s access to higher level courses warranting their entry into the construction industry at a professional level appears to be substantially reduced and undermined by construction employers.

The participation of women entrepreneurs in the South African construction industry is relatively low and restricted and not empirically recorded as in other developed countries (Adeyemi *et al.*, 2006:568; French and Strachan, 2015:230). This makes it difficult to get the actual percentage of women presently operating small businesses in the local construction industry. It has been argued that there is an improvement in women’s access and participation in the construction industry in South Africa (Khuthaza, 2015:online).

Studies have shown that there is still a significant level of imbalance that requires further investigation (Moodley, 2012:29). From the foregoing it can be inferred that there are challenges not only with women’s access into the construction industry but also their ability to remain in the industry. These challenges, moreover, are likely to be varied or different depending on the context. While this study is concerned with the challenges faced by women in the construction industry generally, it draws its data specifically from the experiences of women entrepreneurs operating small businesses within the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

### 1.3 NEED FOR THE STUDY

The general imbalance between men and women in socio-political, cultural and economic life has been demonstrated. This is a problem in all sectors of life and globally (Valji, 2007:3). It has been shown too, that this is particularly a problem in the construction industry in Africa where patriarchy and its consequences pose a very significant barrier to the growth and development of women and society at large, both economically and otherwise (Gurjao, 2007:2). While so much research has been done on gender imbalances (Gurjao, 2007; Radhlinah and Jingmond, 2008; Jahn, 2009; Ozumba and Ozumba, 2012), with some focussing on the economic sphere, few studies have critically examined the male-dominated construction industry. Those that have, are mostly western; as recorded in Amaratunga *et al.*, 2006; Verwey, 2009; Blanchflower, 2009; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010. There is, therefore, a need to explore these issues within different contexts, especially Africa, in order to inform theory and practice.

Previous studies highlighted some limitations. For example, Amaratunga *et al.* (2006) considered the current status of women in the construction industry to be significantly low. The findings of the study further revealed that the underrepresentation of women in this industry leads to the “difficulty in joining the industry through to capturing the most senior position in the organisational hierarchy”. More so, Ginige *et al.* (2007) examined the career development of women in the construction industry. The result of their findings showed “gender stereotype is mostly found in organisations, the culture of the construction industry is predominantly male-dominated. As a result of this, gender stereotypes are visible in the construction industry as a direct antecedent of discrimination of women to achieve desired positions in the industry” (Ginige *et al.*, 2007:8).

Furthermore, Worrall, (2013) studied the construction industry from the cultural perspective and proposed that there is a great challenge to women who intend to join the workforce. The findings reveal “inflexible work practices, lack of supportive networks and the male-dominance (dominated) organisational culture continues to serve as obstacles for women”. These studies examined the construction industry, mostly examining the problem from a developed country perspective and state the reluctance of men in the construction industry to accept women into their fold - whether as workers or small business owners (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2006; Ginige *et al.*, 2007; Worrall, 2013). Thus, previous studies on the subject are highly influenced by the developed market experience (Agapiou, 2002; Lingard and Lin 2004; Areniu

*et al.*, 2005; Amaratunga *et al.*, 2006; Ginige *et al.*, 2007; Worrall, 2013). It appears that fewer studies have been done on the challenges of women in the construction industry in the African context (Adeyemi *et al.*, 2006).

Concentrating on South Africa, Moodley (2012), examined the role of women in the construction industry and observed that it is male dominated, hence restricting women who are not well received by the males. Moodley (2012), alluded to some of the challenges they face in performing their roles, however he did not give these challenges extensive consideration, and did not look at women entrepreneurs within the various building environments. Rather, Moodley focused on women entrepreneurs in the construction industry as a whole. Moreover, he looked at the role of women from a very broad perspective; hence, his suggestion that further study is required taking into account more specific disciplines and local contexts (Moodley, 2012).

This study attempts to contribute in filling this gap by looking specifically at the experiences of women in the local construction industry, with a particular emphasis on their motivation, their start-up and sustainability challenges, and their experience with external support. Research that has been done so far are still wanting in these areas. This study also examines the issue from a gender perspective. This makes the study relevant to the discourse on women's participation in the specific economic sector as well as the gender equality debate as a whole.

The motivation for this study stems from the researcher's interest in issues of gender equality, participation of women in non-traditional industry and the economy generally. It is also rooted in the researcher's experience with close female relatives who work in the construction industry. This has often given rise to several questions in the mind of the researcher regarding the expressed difficulties faced by women who strongly desire to contribute to the economy via the construction industry and, due to the existing gender-culture of the industry, their apparent inability to do so. The construction industry is of particular interest in this study, and of relevance to the issues it attempts to address. This is because of its strategic positioning in the economic development of many nations including South Africa where it is reported to be one of the economic sector that has recorded the fastest growth rate and also promises to maintain this acceleration for some time to come (Khuthaza, 2015:online).

Thus, this study attempts to contribute by meeting the need for investigating this aspect and focusing on an African context – specifically Pietermaritzburg and the experiences of women

who have established small businesses in the construction industry and how they navigate this heavily male-dominated economic sector.

## **1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

A number of critical issues have been outlined. Firstly, the fact that there is gender imbalance and marginalization of women in the construction industry generally; secondly, that the nature of this marginalization may vary in specific areas such as South Africa; thirdly, that despite the fact that there seems to be a level of improvement, it still remains of concern. This suggests a real-world problem in the industry; specifically women's entry and survival in the construction industry, and this still requires deeper exploration. The scarcity of empirical studies of this issue suggests that it is also an unexplored theoretical problem. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry. Thus, this study delves into the experiences of women entrepreneurs in this industry to better understand their experiences and to develop theoretical aspects.

### **1.4.1 Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

- To identify the factors that motivate women to establish small businesses in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.
- To investigate the characteristics of women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.
- To explore the challenges faced by women in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.
- To examine the strategies used by women entrepreneurs to overcome some of the challenges that they face in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.
- To understand the form of assistance that women entrepreneurs in the construction industry need in order to reach their full potential in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

### **1.4.2 Research Questions**

In order to achieve the above objectives, the researcher will attempt to address the following research questions:

- What factors motivate women to establish small in the construction industry?
- What are the characteristics of women owned small businesses?
- What are the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the construction industry and why do they encounter these challenges?
- What are the strategies used by women to address some of the challenges they face in the construction industry? How effective are some of these strategies?
- What form of assistance would women entrepreneurs in the construction industry need in order to reach their full potential and how can women entrepreneurs benefit from this assistance?

All in the context of operating in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

### **1.5 LIMITATION OF STUDY**

There are a number of male-dominated industries in South Africa, however this study focused only on the construction industry with particular emphasis on women operating small businesses in the industry, which constitutes only a small fraction of the total number of women entrepreneurs operating small business in the male-dominated industries in South Africa and is limited to Pietermaritzburg. The primary data for this study was collected in Pietermaritzburg in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This also limited the results generated since it will not represent a general view of women entrepreneurs in the construction profession in South Africa as a whole. Another limitation for this research was the type of sampling method used, which is the snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling technique is a non-probability sampling method, and was deployed in recognizing the research participants due to style of referrals, thus, the results cannot be generalized.

## 1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

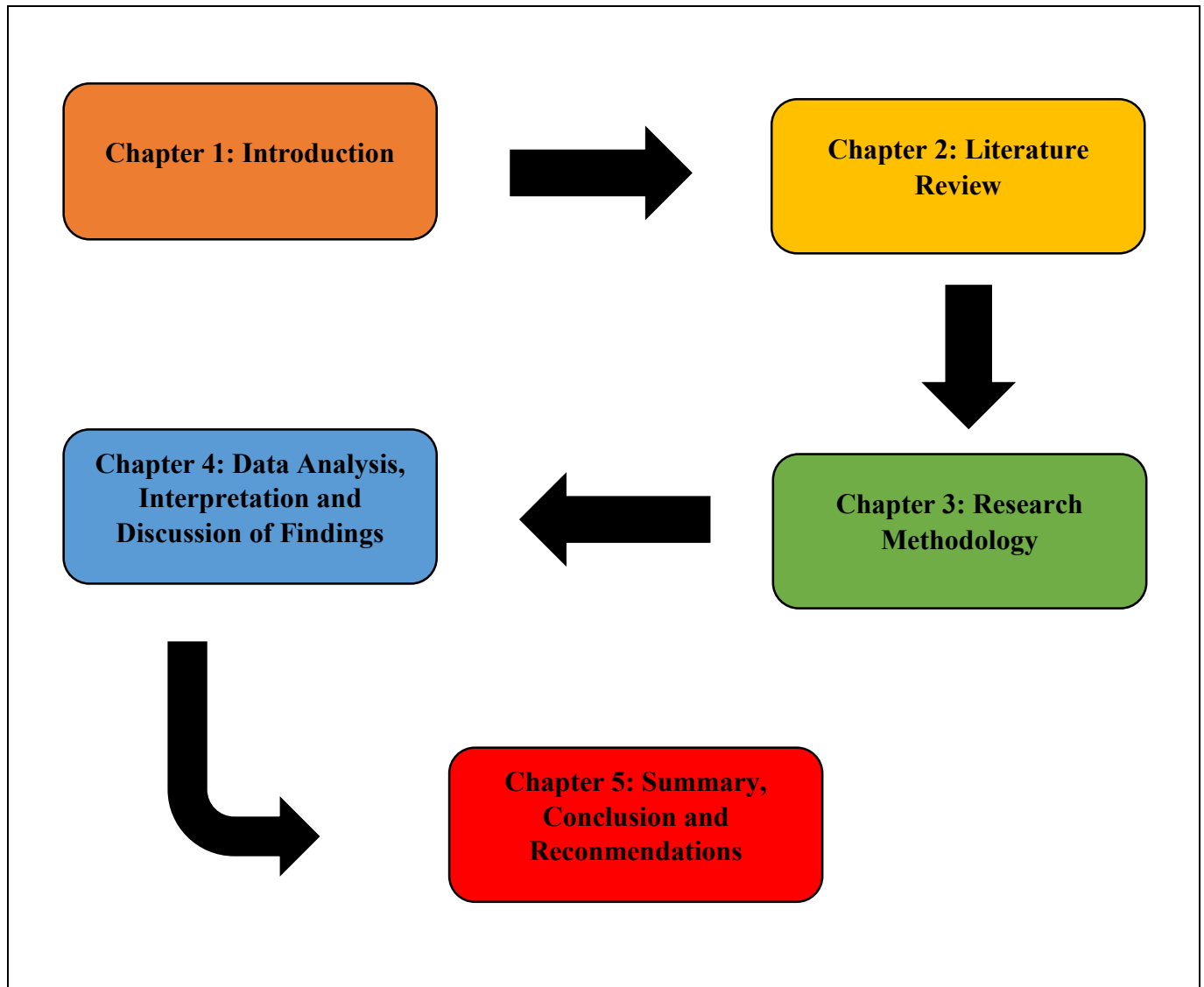
It is important to discuss the research methods used in this study. This study comprises of both descriptive and exploratory research methods. Getting an insight into the research phenomenon requires the researcher to use exploratory research design. Exploratory research method is used to get detailed information on particular subjects which little is known about (Cavana *et al.*, 2001:456; Sakeran and Bongie, 2009). This dissertation is also descriptive in nature as it helps in answering the following questions: who, what, where and how (Cooper and Schindler, 2003:10; Sakeran and Bongie, 2009). The key purpose of this dissertation is to explore the experiences of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry. The study used both primary and secondary data in order to critically engage the subject under investigation. The primary data was collected using in-depth interviews, while the secondary data included published academic journal articles and relevant books. The in-depth interview guide was structured in a way that could be easily understood. In improving the quality of understanding for this study, triangulation was employed. Triangulation is the process of using more than one approach in investigating a particular research question in order to increase, also to ensure a more accurate finding on the research phenomenon (Bryman, 2004:76; Bergman, 2008:23). In-depth interviews were used for collecting data because gender processes are complex and require an ordered approach to bring out salient or burning issues that women entrepreneurs are facing in the construction industry (Hamilton, 2013:91). This data set was triangulated against quantitative data collected for the same purpose, since the research is primarily qualitative.

The snowball sampling technique was used for this study. It is a non-probability sampling technique used in identifying the participants for the research. For this study, thirty (30) participants were targeted. However, during the course of collecting data the researcher found out that many of the women approached were not eager or not available to continue with the interview, after many cancellations of scheduled meetings. Since it was voluntary, the rights of the participants had to be respected. The researcher interviewed sixteen (16) women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Qualitative data collected through in-depth interview was analysed thematically and comparatively. Quantitative data set (i.e. Likert scale table) generated from the in-depth interview was coded and analysed using Microsoft Excel software.



## 1.7 STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

The diagram below illustrates how the dissertation was structured, followed by the outline of chapters.



**Figure 1.1: Structure of dissertation**

Source: (Author's own illustration)

The dissertation is organized into the following five chapters:

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The chapter serves an introductory purpose and allows for the proper positioning of the study within the chosen field of investigation. It is the foundation for the study and provides the foundational point of reference for the subsequent chapters. This is achieved by providing a brief outline of the main research question, its aims and objectives, the purpose of the study, the background, context and motivation for study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

In this chapter relevant literatures and previous studies were reviewed. The chapter reviewed literature on factors that motivate women to be entrepreneurs and distinguishing characteristics of women entrepreneurs, the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in the construction industry, the forms of assistance that women entrepreneurs in the construction industry need in order to reach their full potential and finally strategies for overcoming some of these challenges.

## **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

This chapter provides a description of the research design and research procedure. It includes well detailed definitions and an explanation of the sampling techniques, sampling frame, sample size, measuring instrument, in-depth interviews, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability and finally ethical consideration of the study was provided.

## **Chapter 4: Data analysis, findings and discussions**

This chapter presents, analyses and discusses the findings of the study in relative to existing literature and theories.

## **Chapter 5: Recommendations and conclusion**

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing both the literature-based and empirical findings of the study, as well recommendation for future studies and drawing relevant conclusions.

### **1.8 CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter was an introduction to the study. The following are outlined in this study: background and context of study, the need for the study, the problem statement, research questions and research objectives. The limitations of the study, research methodology and the structure of the study were also presented.

Chapter 2, reviews literature on gender imbalance globally and locally and within economic sectors such as the construction industry, as well as other literature deemed relevant to the study

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The previous chapter looked at the reason that the study was undertaken, the aims and objectives and also the research problem to be addressed. This section will review existing literature on entrepreneurship, women in male-dominated space: in global, African and local contexts, gender theories; motivations; characteristics; challenges; and, finally, the strategies used to overcome some of the challenges.

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The abundance of literature on the issues of gender inequality and the marginalization of women in different sectors as well as the growing interest in these issues is a reflection of reality and the fact that much of its complexity is yet to be adequately explored (Valji, 2007:3). The literature also shows the pervasiveness of the problem in different sectors (Valji, 2007:3). Efforts have been made by activists and organizations in an attempt to address gender imbalances through transitional justice and peace building between genders and they are supported by extensive literature (Valji, 2007:3). This literature probes the problem from a variety of perspectives and contexts including the construction industry with which this dissertation is concerned.

This chapter offers a detailed review of this literature with particular focus on the construction industry. The term construction covers a wide range of activities, which include building and civil engineering works (Hamilton, 2006:3; Oseghale *et al.* 2015:156). The construction industry has its own characteristics that are unique to its sector. The industry engages in both construction and reconstruction - renovations and repairs that can be carried out on existing residential or commercial buildings. The industry is also involved in building and repairs of roads and bridges (Szymanski, 2007:1; Vanags *et al.*, 2015:69/70). Furthermore, installing floors and landscaping, roofing, water drilling, sandblasting and painting (amongst others) are included as areas within the construction industry (Szymanski, 2007:1; Vanags *et al.*, 2015:69/70). It is axiomatic that physical strength is a basic requirement of the construction industry.

The literature review is done in a thematic way reviewing firstly, works that examine the issue from a global perspective through Africa and down to South African, The research covers entrepreneurship in the broader sense. This is followed by a review of literature with specific headings and themes such as the motivation of women entrepreneurs; characteristics of women entrepreneurs; the challenges they face; forms of assistance that women entrepreneurs in the construction industry would need to reach their full potential and the strategies adopted to deal with these challenges.

## **2.2 ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Authors and researchers describe and define entrepreneurship in different ways. Schumpeter (1934, cited in Gedeon, 2010:20), for instance, defines entrepreneurship as “the carrying out of new combinations we call ‘enterprise’; the individuals whose function it is to carry them out we call ‘entrepreneurs’”. The entrepreneur, according to The European Commission (2003:6), has a frame of mind that combines innovation and creativity, takes calculated risks, and has constructed methods of management in order to create and develop economic activity.

Furthermore, an entrepreneur can be defined as any woman or man that starts a new venture where there was previously none (Gedeon, 2010:19). However, the debate is whether or not entrepreneurial traits are taught or individuals are born with these traits. Shapero (1975, cited in Aylward, 2007:10) is of the opinion that entrepreneurial skills cannot be taught; therefore, institutions should not be a basis for that. Supporting this claim, the psychological school of entrepreneurship puts argues that some values and beliefs are rooted in the early stages of life and cannot be taught (Cunningham and Lischeron, 1991:46). In other words, entrepreneurs are born and not made. Contrary to these opinions, it has been suggested that training, education; previous work experience and the background of an individual can also encourage entrepreneurial traits (Haynes, 2003:117). Furthermore, entrepreneurship can be cultivated with the help of education and, by so doing, enhance entrepreneurial experiences (Chell and Allman, 2003:118).

Other definitions describe entrepreneurs as individuals who are innovative, take calculated risks and who create and grow new businesses (Goodbody, 2002:3). In addition, the European Commission (2003, cited in (Aylward, 2007:11), defines an entrepreneur as one who is often characterized by a desire for independence in other to gain financial freedom, and also the readiness to take risk.

Business and entrepreneurs are mutually inclusive as an entrepreneur may play a very important role in the successful running of a business. The entrepreneur is often described to as an individual with exceptional specialised business skills (Aylward, 2007:11). Most entrepreneurs have certain behaviours and values regarding life and work, which distinguishes them from non-entrepreneurs (Aylward, 2007:11). Research in psychology suggest that an individual's values, beliefs, attitudes and needs are the basis for the innovation that drives them to ultimately achieve success in the chosen business amidst the risk involved (Cunningham and Lischeron, 1991:48).

From a global perspective, according to Sarri and Trihopoulou (2004:30), age at start of entrepreneurial activities is between 36-45 years. In another study, carried out in South Africa, it is argued that the highest number of entrepreneurial activities is carried out by individuals within the age group of 34-54 (Nieman and Nieuwenhuizen, 2009:31). Furthermore, another study reveals that the age bracket for business owners is between 31-40 years (Chetty, 2009:165). Moreso, Xavier *et al.* (2012:28), are also of the opinion that participation in entrepreneurial activities is often between the age brackets of 25-34 years followed by the 35-44 years age bracket. These age brackets vary from region to region and also from industry to industry.

According to Wangle (2009:20) and Bowen *et al.* (2014:1273), not all individuals can participate in the construction industry because physical strength is a requisite for all participants regardless of age and gender. The situation is worse for women who are considered by society to be the weaker gender that makes it difficult for them to be accepted in the industry (Wangle, 2009:20; Bowen *et al.*, 2014:1273). The age categories quoted fall between the ages of 30-54 years that does not conflict with the age categories given by each author.

Female entrepreneurship is gaining increasing attention as an academic research subject and is fast obtaining significant emphasis from government, scholars and business practitioners (Carter *et al.*, 2007:1). This results from a great upswing in the amount of new businesses established by women entrepreneurs in the past few years. In the small business sector the rate of growth has become meaningful (Aylward 2007:14). In recent years there has been a rapid increase of female-owned small businesses, nevertheless the academic community and the international community has given the phenomenon very little attention particularly in non-traditional industries (Aylward, 2007:20). In establishing small businesses women

entrepreneurs still encounter and face barriers, nevertheless they still have good success stories to tell (Mathur-Helm, 2010:345).

According to a more recent report, from global viewpoint, the number of women-owned businesses generally accounted for about 68% increase in both revenue and employment (Women-Owned Business Report, 2014:2). In spite of this growth, the opinion is still held that women entrepreneurs continue to be under-represented because, it is suggested, they still face many challenges in the launching and execution of their businesses - this mostly in male-dominated industries (Sang and Powell, 2012:237). This is partly due to the fact that entrepreneurship is often considered to be an activity that is dominated by men - as the literature to the subject seems to confirm (Aylward, 2007:14). However, the contribution of women entrepreneurs continues to grow and extends from the economy to the wider process of social transformation (Adesua-Lincoln, 2011:5348). This illustrates that women are not just positioned in the traditional industries, but are also diversifying into non-traditional industries such as construction, engineering, manufacturing and others (Jahn, 2009:15).

## **2.3 GENDER RELATIONS ACCORDING TO FEMINIST THEORIES**

Different Scholars have identified with feminism and have given various different definitions and opinions about gender. According to Fernández *et al.* (2014:245) gender implies some differences and similarities between men and women in line with a belief system which makes them behave the way they do. According to Lorber (2010:8), gender is “understood to be a personal identity, social status and also a set of relationships among men and women”. He argues that gender inequality is not a personal issue but rather it is the way of society (Lorber, 2010:8). This gender inequality has been integrated into organizations, institutions, the economy and even marriage. In order to close this gap, society needs to develop a different viewpoint and also have a concise reference framework that is not necessarily an individual approach (Lorber, 2010:8).

Gender issues are complex and must be viewed from a gender perspective (Hamilton, 2013:95). Hence, this study uses feminist theory, which assumes that “gender inequalities exist in any society” (Jennifer and Rayini, 2013:110). Gender role is the specified position and the strongly related distinct activities of women and men in society, thus culturally and structurally, the gender role given to women and men are oft-times significantly well defined. There are societies and that continue to assume men dominant and women subordinates (Njogu and

Orchardson-Mazrui, 2005:2). Even in educational institutions girls and boys are conditioned to behave and play roles pre-determined by society (Njogu and Orchardson-Mazrui, 2005:2). Questions arise as to the perceived capabilities and self-image of the girl-child in the performance of carrying out her duties in a society where men are perceived to be dominating (Njogu and Orchardson-Mazrui, 2005:2).

In some cultural groups the problem of gender inequality starts immediately a girl-child is born (Balogun, 2013:561). Balogun (2010:22) notes “the oppression of women is fostered in Africa through cultural vehicles such as proverbs”. In patriarchal cultures male children are given priority and are instilled with a sense of gender superiority (Balogun, 2013:561). Female children are valued less and their vocation is perceived as just caregivers (Okeke, 2005:50).

Gender discrimination is used by feminist researchers in explaining the amount of oppression and subordination found around the world (Oyewumi, 2005:208). According to Nyamko Sabuni “gender is a factor that leads to inequality which has many different faces. It has to do with power and influence, pay and career opportunities, educational qualifications, choice of profession, and health”. (Government office of Sweden, 2014:2).

The South African constitution adopted a bill of rights “which forbids discrimination on the grounds of gender, sex and sexual orientation, among other criteria” (De La Rey and Kottker, 1999:120). This does not make the construction industry less male dominated as studies have shown that women are still underrepresented in the construction industry not only in South Africa but also around the world (Jahn, 2009:45).

Feminism came about as a movement in response to gender inequality (Simmonds, 2012:2). From the feminist point of view, in the society we live in, especially in the political domain, the equality of both men and women should be seen and encouraged in all spheres- such as in the economy - because the world economy would be substantially better off if women were allowed to participate in full (Simmonds, 2012:3). On this note, there are four main approaches to feminist theories; namely, liberal, Marxist, radical and socialist

***Liberal Feminism:*** Holds that women and men are fundamentally very similar. For this reason they should be treated the same way under the law (Lorber, 2010:10). The major contribution of liberal feminism is the fact that the society discriminates against women. It is also argued by liberal feminists that the girl-child should be given the same opportunity to be educated and have the same civil rights as men, since they share the same basic human traits (Lorber,



2010:10). Liberal feminism also focuses on liberty and equality of both men and women. Wollstonecraft (2010), one of the first liberal feminist in the western world, argues that the capacity of women thinking is the same as men and the biological difference is not enough reason for women to be relegated to the political background. She went on to say that the reason women tend to act inferior to men is a result of lesser education, which itself was a result of inequality, rather than a justification for it (Wollstonecraft, 2010:20).

Liberal feminist theory states that men and women are equal. However this is observably not the case in the construction industry as women are still under-represented due to the challenges they face ranging from limited networking, inflexible and long working hours, cultural traits, to discrimination (Katherine and Abigail, nd:238). As a result, there are less career prospects for women entrepreneurs seeking to pursue small business ventures in the construction industry.

**Marxist feminism:** Places emphasis on economic systems, and trace the oppression of women to the introduction of private property that was (according to them) brought about by the capitalist system of government (Swigonski and Raheim, 2011:13). Marxist feminist scholars traditionally argue that the socialist system should be in place while the capitalist system of government should be scrapped in order for the means of production to belong to society in general and not men alone (Swigonski and Raheim, 2011:13). Under capitalism (they contend) women will continue to be subordinate to men depending on them for their every need (Swigonski and Raheim, 2011:13).

**Radical feminism:** The radical feminist focuses more on the exploitation and oppression of women. Their catchword is “patriarchy” which signifies a system in which men are the primary authorities both in the political domain and in society (Lorber, 2010:16). It is difficult to erase patriarchy since it is deeply rooted and embedded in the minds of most men and, indeed, society (Lorber, 2010:16).

**Socialist feminism:** The main focus of the socialist feminist is to integrate and unite the patriarchy and capitalist systems - this being influenced by radical feminism, Marxism and psychoanalysis. Their argument is that women are being oppressed and this is mostly evidenced by a blend of various forces which include - but are not limited to - psychological, economic and societal forces (Byers and Crockers, 2012:2). “Socialist feminism attempts to synthesize the best insights of Marxist and Radical feminism. Capitalism, male dominance, racism and

imperialism are intertwined and inseparable”, making it impossible to reduce the oppression of women into one single cause or type (Byers and Crockers, 2012:2).

Feminist researchers have identified the male-bias in the construction of knowledge, especially historical knowledge. They have not only exposed the dominance of men in political history but have also called attention to the invisibility of women in historical writings. Consequently, feminist’s historians have developed a new subfield called women’s history even as they advocate the use of gender as an analytical category in the study of any historical subject. (Oyewumi, 2005:208)

Literature about women has increased in the past decade thanks to the various women’s movement campaigns for the inclusion of women in political agendas. Before now only men were involved in politics (Oyewumi, 2005:209). Despite the increase of literature on women, women mostly still remain invisible or misrepresented in the mainstream or, as Oyewumi terms it, “male stream” in African history and they are either not present at all or they depicted as naturally inferior and subordinate, as eternal victims of male oppression (Oyewumi, 2005:209).

The fact that women are oppressed is no longer newsworthy; it is presented in a vast array of scholarly articles and even in the society we live in (Ngwainmbi, 2012:50). Despite the various forms of discriminations women continue to struggle in order to overcome some of the constraints they face. The purpose of this struggle is to gain total emancipation and be liberated in order to gain equality in all forms of human endeavor - culturally, socially, politically, economically and otherwise (Ngwainmbi, 2012:50).

The construction industry is one industry where women entrepreneurs faced myriads of challenges and one of such challenge is the inability of women entrepreneurs being restricted in their ability to start small business ventures. The need for achievement and lust for control continues to keep them going even in the face of adversity (Simpeh, 2011:3).

Finally this study uses the sociological theory of entrepreneurship which talks about the social cultural constraints which influences entrepreneurial activities and makes entrepreneurs adapt to the ways of society (Loh and Rayini, 2013:109). The sociological theory of entrepreneurship is also used; this discusses the social cultural constraints influencing an entrepreneurial activity that also encourages entrepreneurs to adapt to the ways of society (Jennifer and Rayini, 2013:109). Sociological theory of entrepreneurship is concerned with an analysis of how social cultures affect entrepreneurship, (Loh and Rayini, 2013:109).

This theory is therefore used in this study as it recognizes that social cultures are able to influence entrepreneurship. In this light women are affected by cultures prevalent in their societies. Simpeh (2011:4), commenting on the sociological theory of entrepreneurship, noted that the sociological background of an individual is one of the push factors in becoming an entrepreneur. It is important to note that women's social background plays a pivotal role in determining whether or not to become entrepreneurial - especially in a society where women are perceived to be venturing into a non-traditional industry such as the construction industry.

Furthermore Simpeh (2011:4) notes that some marginalized individuals are propelled by their disadvantages and seek to improve their position. The construction industry is largely associated with men, and this creates a yawning gap between men and women. As such this theory will enable the researcher to understand the marginalized groups, which are often women, and some of the devices they employed to propel themselves into new arenas.

Population ecology is an idea that forms part of the sociological theory of entrepreneurship, and recognizes that environmental factors play an important role in the survival of businesses, (Simpeh, 2011:4). Population ecology consists of government legislation, employees, customers and competition. This part of the theory is important in highlighting some of the challenges that are associated with being a woman operating small business in the construction industry. Government legislation might disadvantage women and therefore present a challenge to the successful operation of businesses. Customers might stereotype women who own or manage construction companies, seeing them as incompetent and are therefore unwilling to do business with them. This stereotyping might be the result of deeply held prejudices against women in society and then seeing such women going into an unfamiliar terrain such as the construction industry. As such, women are affected by the culture of the society in which they do business.

The above mentioned feminist theories and gender inequality debates offered a lens through which this study was carried out, providing the basic assumptions and perspective from which women's experience in the construction industry was examined.

## **2.4 WOMEN IN MALE-DOMINATED SPACE: GLOBAL, AFRICAN AND LOCAL CONTEXTS**

This study's main focus of this study is on women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry. However, emphasis is also laid on the recruitment process of women into the construction industry as this forms the basis of background knowledge of the industry which is often not gained by women due to patriarchy.

Most women entrepreneurs seem to operate from a traditionally gendered environment, which is the retail and service industry. Only a few women entrepreneurs are involved in male-dominated industries (Jaafar *et al.*, 2014:1). Comparatively, there is a lower percentage of women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in male-dominated industries such as Manufacturing; Agriculture, Mining; Utilities and Construction (Blanchflower, 2009:362; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010:21). Women have made strides in most occupations and industries. However, there is a huge gap between men and women in many male-dominated industries (Catalyst Quick Take, 2013:1). Regardless of the huge number of women entrepreneurs establishing new businesses, women are still under-represented in the European Union countries Africa, and South Africa, where this research was undertaken (Jaafar *et al.*, 2014:1). According to Aulin and Jingmond (2011:1), the construction industry is still operating from a gender based perspective, which precludes full participation of women entrepreneurs. The jobs undertaken by women who go into the construction industry are usually administrative. There are great challenges for women's progress in male-dominated industries and the construction industry is not an exception. Some examples of male-dominated industries are oil and gas, mining, utilities and construction.

The low representation of women in these industries is emphasised by the empirical information available. In the mining industry, for example, women occupy only 13.2% in U.S while in Canada the figure is 19.0%. Women in construction in the U.S is also low at 9.0% as compared to 11.2% in Canada (Catalyst: 2013:1). In the early 90's in Australia the percentage of women entrepreneurs recruited into the Australian building sector was recorded as 14% of the total workforce (Linguard and Lin, 2004:409). There is a decline in the amount of women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry even with the already low representation. Since the early 90's - when there were 14% - the figure has dropped to 11.8%, while in mining it is 15.1% (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2013:3).

There are over 8.4 million construction jobs in the U.S, however, in 2010, only 2.6 percent were held by women entrepreneurs according to the National Women's Law Center (NWLC) (Shanker, 2013:2). The reason for this low percentage may be due to the fact that there are barriers such as sexual harassment, shortage of information about the opportunities in the construction sector, and gender stereotypes (Shanker, 2013:2). Furthermore, the largest sector in the UK is suggested to be the construction industry in terms of both Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the number of people employed (Agapiou, 2002:698). A total of 70, 000 has been estimated to be the number of new construction workers employed per year, but because of shortages in the labour force, the needs of the people cannot be met (Agapiou, 2002:698). In 2000, the total percentage of female trainees that were recruited into the construction industry in the UK was just 4% of the industries workforce (Agapiou, 2002:698).

These figures are applicable to a country in the developed world. However, the percentage is not very different from South Africa (Jahn, 2009:16). As at 2008 a total of 426,169 people were employed in the construction industry and only 28,975 – i.e. 6.8% - were women (Jahn, 2009:16). In another survey covering women and men in contracting and construction related organisations as at 2009, only 7% was contracted to women entrepreneurs and 93% to men (Jahn, 2009:19). According to statistics South Africa (2013), there was an increase of only 1.42% of women employed in the construction industry, while men increased to 9.39% (Statistics South Africa, 2013:23. This suggests that there is still a gap between men and women in the construction industry in South Africa.

More so, even after apartheid ended in 1994 and where legislative policies to enhance gender related matters were introduced, some sectors of the economy - such as the construction industry - still lag behind in embracing the change which proposes the employment and promotion of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry (Jahn, 2009:20). According to Statistics South Africa (2009:30) women comprised 44, 8% of the total employment population in South Africa. However, only 13% of women are employed in the construction industry compared to the service and retail, which was 31.20% as at 2009. As at the end of 2014 there was a very minimal increase on the total employment rate for men and women which stands at 1,057 and 124 respectively, which amounts to 10.57% increase for men and 1.27% for women in the industry from (Ozumba and Ozumba, 2012:29; Statistics South Africa, 2014:32). This is not unexpected since the industry is typically male dominated and there are few women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry (Ozumba and Ozumba,

2012:38). From the foregoing it can be seen that the construction industry continues to be male dominated.

According to Rathbun the CEO of Triangle Construction (cited in Pulsinelli 2011:1), the construction industry becomes more advantaged if the number of women involved increases. “The construction industry wins because women bring a different perspective to the industry, they are great at multi-tasking and they are good at relationship building” (Pulsinelli, 2011:1). Furthermore, Bollenbach, a project engineer, also at Triangle Construction, (cited in Pulsinelli 2011:1) affirms that if the number of women increase “the industry will benefit from a variety of perspectives and backgrounds”.

In a keynote address delivered at the 2002 South African housing awards ceremony Mthembu-Mahanyele said “For centuries women in Africa built their huts, houses and homes, clayed floors, thatched roofs, cultivated the land, made money and raised their kids, while men were busy with more important things elsewhere” (cited in Verwey, 2005). By implication, women have been involved in building and construction in perpetuity.

According to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2004, discussing women and entrepreneurship, the entrepreneurial activities that women are involved in are expanding all over the world in the formal sector, and will play an even greater role in the informal sector. Women from different backgrounds have made contributions to their environment in the spirit of entrepreneurship - but construction has been left out (Arenius *et al.*, 2005:3).

The contribution of women entrepreneurs extends from the economic sphere to include the wider process of social transformation. According to Adesua-Lincoln (2011:5348), women’s productive activity - particularly in the construction industry - empowers them economically and enables them to contribute more to the overall development of the country. Adesua-Lincoln (2011). further argues that whether they are involved in small or medium scale activities in the formal or informal sector, women entrepreneurial activities are not only a means for economic survival but, for woman in general, also have positive social repercussions (Adesua-Lincoln, 2011:5348). However, Adesua-Lincoln (2011:5348), stressed that female enterprises are faced with myriads of obstacles and challenges such as lack of support from government and non-governmental agencies.

Due to societal and cultural constraints, there are a variety of obstacles facing women entrepreneurs today in their entrepreneurial development. These include poor access to markets, access to information technology, obtaining finance, poor linkages with support

services and an unfavourable policy and regulatory environment (Otunaiya *et al.*, 2013:16). Harbal (2012:1) affirms that some of the factors that hinder the success of women units in the construction industry are none availability of infrastructural materials, finance, labour, marketing, social and cultural factors. Harbal *ibid.* also observes that another significant problem identified is sexual harassment by male colleagues, senior staff and unnecessary competition in the field (Harbal, 2012:1).

In recent times - in the construction industry - gender-based barriers are still an issue in the recruitment of females. Social norms determine the occupational segregation women are facing in the labour market where males are the major decision makers. Most women working in the construction industry mainly hold administrative positions. It can be concluded that the construction industry is not only male dominated, but also the presence and participation of women is relatively low (Radhlinah and Jingmond, 2008:1).

More studies have shown that the ability of women to enter into the construction industry is seen as an important issue which requires attention, thus, making the participation of women entrepreneurs wanting to start small business difficult since they have no prior work experience (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2006:561). In view of this women entrepreneurs have great difficulty running successful small businesses in the construction industry.

In the context of the number of studies that have been done in recent times, the position of women entrepreneurs entering into the construction industry and remaining there is a very important issue (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2006:562). It is imperative to look into the reason why women cannot remain in the industry as operators of small businesses, even when they are able to gain entry into the industry. Several constraints militate against women's entry into the industry including culture and gender discrimination, poor working conditions, environmental insensitivity and a wide problem with image (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2006:562).

It is argued that women entrepreneurs working in the construction industry work and learn on the job as they operate their businesses on a day-to-day basis since male colleagues are often not interested in assisting such women (Coyle and Daniele, 2005:2). Making female entrepreneurs operating in the male-dominated industry encounter intense gender stereotyping and even greater difficulty accessing formal networks that provides resources and information about the organisation they work in (Coyle and Daniele, 2005:2).

In as much as women are discriminated against in the construction industry due to the fact that it is an industry dominated by men, some women entrepreneurs in South Africa have recorded

positive progress. Verwey (2009, cited in Jahn (2009:15), observes that women are successfully launching careers in the construction industry and have even got tenders from the South Africa government to build 50 houses in Soweto in 2008. This building project was awarded to three women-owned construction firms and the contract was well executed (Jahn, 2009:15).

## **2.5 FACTORS THAT MOTIVATE WOMEN TO ESTABLISH SMALL BUSINESSES**

This section discusses the different motives for engaging in entrepreneurial activities. There are two main motives - namely push and pull motives. A literature review indicates that there are different types of motivation in different countries, however there are underlying dimensions in the consistency of these motivations. Below are some of the more general motivations for entrepreneurs to start a new venture.

***Need for achievement:*** This is the need for personal growth through entrepreneurship. It has to do with the realisation of one's self which includes achieving a personal vision for the business and the various associated responsibilities, and to learn through some of the challenges of starting/operating a business (Akehurst *et al.*, 2012:2490; Uddin and Kanti, 2013:148).

***Balancing family and work life:*** This accounts for a major reason that women in particular become entrepreneurs, the goal being to gain flexibility in providing for their family needs and running their businesses (Buthelezi, 2011:39). However not all business sectors afford women this opportunity.

***Need for Independence:*** This is the ability to be in control of one's personal work life and time. Furthermore, it means being autonomous in decision making and been capable of combining both personal life with work (Renko *et al.*, 2012:668; Uddin and Kanti, 2013:148).

***Wealth creation:*** This is the realisation of the importance of growing earnings and wealth which can be achieved through various means such as, thinking outside the box, background checks on existing ideas, beating competitors, building personal relationships with prospective customers, among other things (Stephan *et al.*, 2015:15).

***Status and recognition:*** This relates to aspects concerning entrepreneur's social status such as the need to gain personal respect and recognition among family and friends which extends to the broader community (Akehurst *et al.*, 2012:2490).



**Family roles:** Some businesses are family owned so the motivation stems from the need or desire to continue or take over the family business, and/or to follow the example of role models (Stephan *et al.*, 2015:15).

**Dissatisfaction:** Dissatisfaction with previous work is also classified as a motivation for starting a business. Previous jobs not being challenging enough, lack of growth potential and low pay, among other reasons, can lead one to establish a small business (Akehurst *et al.*, 2012:2490).

**Social and community motivations:** Some studies suggests that some entrepreneurs are motivated to establish their own business in order to give back to the community where they reside through job creation or philanthropy (Stephan *et al.*, 2015:16). This also includes social responsibilities (Jayawarna *et al.*, 2011:35).

**Job security:** Individuals have expectations and needs which change in the course of time. If these expectations are not met at the appropriate times it begins to affect their job performance (Şenol, 2011:34). Hence, a need arises for organisations to interfere in the affairs of employees in order to change their attitudes according by setting targets. Having job security is an important external motivational factor for individuals to want to remain in their jobs and lack of job security is a development that may result in one to leaving his/her job for another or start own business (Şenol, 2011:34). If employees have job security it helps to bring out their best at their places of work, which in turn benefits their employer.

An impressive array of studies provides general agreement that men and women have similar reasons for establishing their own businesses (Butter, 1993:60; Orhan and Scott, 2001:337; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010:16; Stephan *et al.*, 2015:37). For example, Butter (1993:60) states that:

*“Overall, men’s and women’s motivations for business initiation are similar. As with male entrepreneurs, female seek independence, autonomy, high income, and the opportunity to be their own boss. One difference between men and women in their motivation to initiate a business is that men often cite economic reasons, whereas women often cite family needs. Whereas men generally see entrepreneurship as a business decision, many women view it as a life choice- a way of integrating family and career needs”.*

In order to understand the reasons why some women entrepreneurs establish businesses in a particular sector, it is imperative to observe the purpose for starting the business in the first place (Aylward, 2007:21). The reason may affect their choice of industry to go into and establish a business. Many women start their own business because there are no alternative sources of income (Aylward, 2007:21). Although there are similarities among men and women entrepreneurs such as demographic characteristics and business skills, most studies argue that there are more differences than similarities (Aylward, 2007:21). Butter (1993 cited in Aylward, 2007:21) argues that one of such differences is the fact that for most men, “being an entrepreneur is a business strategy while for women it’s a life strategy”.

Women dissatisfied with their careers see entrepreneurship as a means of accommodating their family commitments and work at the same time (Cromie, 1987:259; Admin, 2010:1). The desire for independence is often the first motivating factor and is classified as a “pull” factor (Kirkwood, 2009:348). Lesser number of gender differences has been highlighted in relation to independency. Independence happens to be a similar factor for motivation for both male and female who want to become entrepreneurs (Kirkwood, 2009:348). In some countries independence is part of a national culture that ensures that an individual can manage his or her life (Kirkwood, 2009:248). “Motivations to become an entrepreneur that relate to work are usually considered to be push factors and are often key factors that can influence the preparation for an entrepreneurial career” (Kirkwood, 2009:349).

A central focus of literature on women entrepreneurs is the motivation for women to develop and grow their own business (McKay, 2001:151). Government and academics are concentrating on encouraging entrepreneurship and mostly target women because they have been identified as a “major force for innovation and job creation” (Orhan and Scott, 2001:232). Motivation among women entrepreneurs in launching a new venture can also be pull factors and push factors (Pines *et al.*, 2010:188). “Pull” and “push” are common factors which explain different motivations among entrepreneurs. Pull factors fascinate while push factors compel individuals into entrepreneurial activities that for women means to start their own business (Pines *et al.*, 2010:188). Entrepreneurship has given women entrepreneurs the opportunity to use their experience and expertise to determine their destiny (Orhan and Scott, 2001:232).

Researchers have not given much attention to the question of the presence of gender differences in the push and pull motives (of becoming entrepreneurs) (Kirkwood, 2009:34). This is not as a result of omission; rather researchers have focused their attention more on women

entrepreneurs as a group rather than on gender, which makes gender comparative research still lagging behind in the field of entrepreneurship (Kirkwood, 2009:34). However it has been shown that women are more influenced by the push than the pull factors, since in Africa women are mostly poor and often look up to their husband for help due to culture and often cannot depend solely on the income they get from their husbands (Mitchell, 2004:170). But since the man is usually unable to meet all the needs of the family, economic and otherwise, women entrepreneurs seek the opportunity to expand their knowledge and the freedom to control their future (Mitchell, 2004:170).

Studies have shown that there are numerous other reasons believed to be gender specific for women to be motivated to start businesses which (Aylward, 2007:23). Economic necessity is one such motivation and this is often linked to the desire of women to gain and ensure the financial security of their immediate families (Aylward, 2007:23). Another motivation for female entrepreneurs is often also to career selection. Certain factors make it possible for women to enter into careers of their choice or run their own businesses, which could allow them to manage their families and work at the same time. Some of these key factors include their level of education and the ability to be career self-sufficient (Buthelezi, 2012:2).

Women entrepreneurs are also motivated by their socio-economic background, the ability to overcome cultural constraints in learning experiences, differences in orientation and motivations apart from race or culture (Buthelezi, 2012:2). As entrepreneurs, women are able to both earn money needed for the day to day running of the home, and to care for their families (Mitchell, 2004:172-172). This motivating factor is also one of the pull factors for entrepreneurship motivation.

The following section looks at the characteristics of women owned small businesses.

## **2.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OPERATING SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

Entrepreneurship has always been associated with the male gender because of its attributes have been considered to be traditionally male (Jaafar *et al.*, 2014:79). Scholars suggest that women are in the forefront of entrepreneurship but this fact is ignored by most studies (Jaafar *et al.*, 2014:79). In order to better understand the characteristics of women-owned small businesses, we need to take into consideration the various factors that influences a women's experience ranging from culture, class, educational background, age and ethnicity (Mathur-

Helm, 2010:3). It is argued that the performance of women owned businesses have a lower survival rate due to lack of work experience which hinders them from building up profit and sales in their businesses and, more importantly, financial constraints including having less start-up capital. Studies also show that women work fewer hours than men due to family commitment making it more difficult for women to achieve success (Fairlie and Robb, 2009:2).

According to Marlow and Patton (2005:724), in a society where access to economic and social independence is achieved primarily through waged work, women face a range of barriers and challenges associated with their gender to gaining such independence. Against the backdrop of the concentration of women in relatively low paid, low status, and low skilled service work, Meager *et al.* (1994:15) asserts that this is largely so because “they (female self-employed) hold less financial capital than their male counterparts, or because they tend to enter sectors with poorer business prospects”. It is also noted that under the structural constraints, the majority of ventures capitalists are male, they construct tightly woven networks where the knowledge of how to enter and successfully negotiate through such networks are difficult (Marlow and Patton, 2005:727). The notion that men and women are generalized as group might be argued and this generated a false universalism whereas in reality gender “is a space whose occupation are negotiated and experienced in different ways” (Jones, 1994:75).

Even though literature does not include much about personal characteristics of women operating small businesses in the construction industry, a few can be identified; these also relate to personal characteristics of entrepreneurs in general. They are discussed below:

Entrepreneurs have many unique and individual traits that are not gender-specific. Entrepreneurs are *optimistic*, having a positive outlook regardless of disappointment, setbacks and past shortcomings. When business goes well the entrepreneur is further stimulated to do more which gives credence for more accomplishments (Chyi-Iyi and Paul, 2009:3). *Self-confidence* is another feature of most entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are capable of working on themselves to gain confidence. The ability to overcome challenges in executing business opportunities. Entrepreneurs are *visionaries*’ - they picture the best possible options in establishing and running their businesses on a daily basis and as the day passes it becomes clearer where the business is heading (Barringer and Ireland, 2010:41). Studies suggest that if many people take chances that they may turn out to be successful businesses owners that illustrate another entrepreneurial trait – they are *risk takers* though sometimes moderately so.

It is not that entrepreneurs are not afraid to fail but the eagerness to succeed outweighs that of fear of failure (Barringer and Ireland, 2010:41).

Studies also reveals that the most active age grade for entrepreneurs is between 35 to 45 years which agrees with a large body of literature that indicates that most entrepreneurs are young and *energetic* (Sarri and Trihopoulou, 2004:30; Nieman and Nieuwenhuizen, 2009:31; Barringer and Ireland, 2010:41; Xavier *et al.* 2012:28). A great importance is given to entrepreneurs' energy as this stands as a key point for investors deciding whether to invest in their new venture (Barringer and Ireland, 2010:41). Another significant trait of an entrepreneur is *creativity*. Creative thinking is the basis of the construction of new products and ideas and has the potential to be useful to consumers, been creative as an entrepreneur gives the organisation a competitive edge in the market (Fillis and Rentschler, 2010:3). Entrepreneurs are usually *promoters, tenacious, strong characters, networkers, persuasive, tolerant of ambiguity, achievement motivated, and have a strong work ethic* among other things (Barringer and Ireland, 2010:41). The personal characteristics of an entrepreneur have a significant link with their attitude. Individual attitude towards innovation breeds entrepreneurial success that, by extension, is achieved through the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics (Sutanto and Eliyana, 2014:128). In achieving entrepreneurial success, entrepreneurs must, at least, have some or all the basic characteristics highlighted above.

### **2.6.1 Leadership styles**

In male-dominated or non-traditional industries, the total employment percentage for women is lower than 25% (Catalyst Quick Take, 2013:1). This signifies that there is still a disproportionate fraction between men and women in most male-dominated occupations and industries. Recent studies have shown that women in construction are seen as less competent when judged from the perspective of feminine stereotypes (Yusimit and Didona, 2009:3). However, when expressing leadership in masculine style women are seen as being successful but are not usually liked by their peers. (Yusimit and Didona, 2009:3). Being aware of such stereotypes and their consequent attitudes, it is necessary to objectively ask and respond to the question: "Do women make better leaders?" this is a very debatable question. According to Eagly and Carli (2003:825), women entrepreneurs have a unique and typical style of leadership, which is both an advantage and disadvantage particularly arising from positions in a male-dominated industry. Some of the constraints faced make them vulnerable and encounter issues

that are detrimental and reduce their ability to reach for the top, creating a negative judgment of their performance as leaders. Research also shows that women leaders are likely to be transformational because they show behaviours that are consistent with female roles. It is also argued that female entrepreneurs are better leaders because they are relatively very sensitive to issues and are empathetic, sociable and are relationship oriented (Toor and Ofori, 2010:2).

It has also been shown that business start-ups are more likely to be successful if a woman is on the executive team and also the number of entrepreneurs who expect growth for their businesses is higher for females than males because female-led start-ups usually experience lower failure rates when moving to the growth stage (Williams, 2012:3).

The studies showing female entrepreneurs possessing better leadership styles and being better leaders cannot be overemphasised. According to Broomhall (2013:1), female entrepreneurs are more transformational than their male counterparts. Women care more about the development of their followers; they listen and stimulate them to think outside the box, they are more inspirational and more ethical. More attributes of female entrepreneurs are:

- Female entrepreneurs tend to lead from the centre rather from the top and the structure of their enterprise reflects this. In other words women entrepreneurs in top positions carry all the staff along no matter their position just to make sure that everyone is treated with justice and fairness.
- The questions asked usually take a bigger picture perspective of the work they are assigned to do and the value of it.
- Women leaders place great value on the relationship they have among employees and the success of the organisation at large. They are more inspirational and also more ethical. They care about their followers, that is, their subordinates, women entrepreneurs listen more and stimulate them to think outside the box
- They prefer to communicate directly with members of staff, and in so doing create a good working relationship and,
- Female entrepreneurs are comfortable with diversity, having been outsiders themselves and know the value fresh ideas could bring (Broomhall, 2013:2).

In summary, the promotion of women entrepreneurs into leadership roles should be encouraged - most especially in the construction industry. Most often women are not able to get into the industry because they lack basic knowledge. The challenges of the construction industry also

pose a great threat as studies show that women are still under-represented in the industry (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2006:561). The intention is not to start a gender debate but to outline that the attributable qualities of good leadership are changing towards skills which women entrepreneurs naturally possess (Broomhall, 2013:2).

### **2.6.2 Survival rates of women and men start-up businesses**

Research has shown that regular employment provides opportunities for both males and females to acquire human capital and the finance necessary to start a new business (Boden and Nucci, 2000:348 Justo *et al.* 2015:776). Nevertheless, women still find it difficult to get this capital and other finance that is necessary to start a new business (Mitchell, 2011:2). This is so because most women entrepreneurs in Africa mainly do not complete high school, making most women less educated than men and that has a great impact on their businesses because the business has to be well understood in order to make profit (Fairlie and Robb, 2009:5). Gender has continued to raise issues in regular employment globally woman are still being paid less than men for the same work.

Women have been shown to receive a lower pay package at the end of the month which implies that female entrepreneurs are disadvantaged in the quality and amount of human capital that they earn under paid employment (Boden Jr. and Nucci, 2000:348; Justo *et al.* 2015:776). Women generally have fewer years of work experience, less exposure to the business environment and are not able to fit into certain managerial positions. It is suggested that female entrepreneurs need to be more mentored and educated, given the low survival rate of their businesses (Boden and Nucci, 2000:348; Justo *et al.* 2015:776). However, some studies have stated that some women really work hard grow their businesses but due to family constraints these dreams are most times hampered (Verwey, 2006:7). For example, “when Sarah wanted to grow her business she became the victim of discrimination, oppression and domestic violence and was beaten” (Verwey, 2006:7). This suggest that most women entrepreneurs want to grow their businesses but cannot due to family pressures; balancing work and family is at most times difficult to achieve (Roomi *et al.*, 2009:280).

The prospect for the survival of business start-ups (for both female and male entrepreneurs) are much greater when the owner has 10 years or more of working experience as well as a full university degree. Women entrepreneurs are often disadvantaged in this respect, sometimes

due to lower quality education and shorter work experience (Boden and Nucci, 2000:361; Justo *et al.* 2015:776). Nevertheless, when managing of organization women have been shown to be more capable as they behave differently to men and have different managerial styles. However, confirming the contention at the beginning of this paragraph, businesses where the owner-managers have 4 years of college education or more - and with a minimum of 10 years' working experience - are more likely to survive. In this regard female entrepreneurs are at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts (Boden Jr. and Nucci, 2000:361; Justo *et al.* 2015:776).

Another reason male-owned family businesses survive more than female-owned ones is a result of that male and female entrepreneurs having different family-business backgrounds. This explains why some men perform better than women since they are allowed to take part in the family business while the women are less recognized (Fairlie and Robb, 2009:5). It is also argued that men are more likely to work in the family business, which helps them to gain more experience and provides opportunities for acquiring human capital – which is essential when starting their own business (Fairlie and Robb, 2009:5). Studies also suggest that a prospective entrepreneur with a family-business background is at an advantage as this background sharpens their decision when starting a new business (Aylward, 2007:17).

## **2.7. CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

This section discusses various challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the construction industry. This includes access to finance, stereotyping; the inability to get support from family and friends; balancing work and family demands; access to human resources; low self-esteem; lack of knowledge (experience); social – cultural views and lack of adequate training.

Women in general face myriads of problems in every part of their daily lives ranging from discrimination to unemployment. Included is the lack of finance available for starting a business; this poses a threat to the establishment of any form of business (Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007:503; Gallant, 2015:4). A consequence of these challenges is that women entrepreneurs often embrace starting small businesses (Mboko and Smith-Hunter, 2009:167). The construction industry is a large, male-dominated sector of the economy. This presents a major challenge for women looking to enter the industry and possibly expecting equal opportunity. Surveys show that the major challenge is the “image” of the industry (Gale,



1994:4). Regardless of various initiatives and efforts to change this profile, the construction industry continues to be mostly male-dominated and still remains unchanged (Sand and Powell, 2012:238). It is evident that the continuous gender imbalance in this industry affects the successful launching of small businesses by women entrepreneurs (Sand and Powell, 2012:238).

The culture of an organisation describes the unique way people within the organisation interact between themselves, with the workforce and with society at large. The various challenges faced by women often exclude them from such cultures (Greenwood, 1997:6). Women, in most cases, have the necessary skills to bring about cultural change by way of team building and being good communicators with colleagues, the workforce and externally. This creates a prerequisite for conflict management since women handle conflict situations better than men (Construction Industry Board, 1996:12). Women entrepreneurs should be supported in operating small businesses that will help in increasing entrepreneurial activities in industries and in this context the construction industry (Welter, 2004:221; Welter *et al.*, 2014:1).

### **2.7.1 Access to finance**

This section identifies the details of some of the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.

Businesses run by women are growing rapidly, and every year see more being started. However little is known about their access to finance from private investors. Studies suggest that women's access to investors who provide financial backing for small start-ups ("angel financing") is lower than that of men, but both genders have equal opportunity to receive loans. Women will be more likely go to women "angels" and will sometimes get funding - perhaps to a small extent (Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007:506). "Angel investors" are individuals who provide start-up capital for individual or corporate entrepreneurs - often with the aim of getting equity shares in the supported company. The importance of angel investors can never be over emphasized because they aid in developing new ventures (Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007:506). However, this is dependent on the industry in which the business is operating, and the fact is that construction is known for its massive and expensive machinery. It cannot be over emphasized that women business owners wanting to get loans in the construction industry find it difficult as they have no collateral for large loans (Hung *et al.*, 2002:436; Lofstrom *et al.*, 2014:235). The probability of women entrepreneurs relying on informal and internal funding

is higher – this includes such as micro-financers, personal savings or loans from their family (International Finance Corporation, 2011:35)

The past years have witnessed angel investors coming together to form alliances in order to reduce the risk associated with deals and transactions in lending out capital to intended beneficiaries. They also use intermediaries to bring together both angel investors and entrepreneurs (Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007:506). The intermediary's job is to refer trusted entrepreneurs after fulfilling all necessary criteria to other business associates who are willing to help or go into joint ventures (Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007:506). According to Becker-Blease and Sohl (2007:518) the quantity of women-owned business that is being financed by angel investors is low. Further evidence shows that entrepreneurs prefer to apply for capital from angel investors of the same gender and are likely to get it (Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007:518). Since the capital needed to start a business in the construction industry can be substantial, women find it difficult to get bank loans for start-up businesses due to the high level of risk involved. An aggravating factor is that usually such women do not have the collateral security needed in getting these loans either from angel investors or financial institutions.

### **2.7.2 Stereotyping**

Undoubtedly, gender-based stereotyping continues to be real in our society. Compared with women, men are believed to be more convincing, autonomous, risk takers, task oriented and instrumental in leading businesses and are knowledgeable in carrying out new ventures or managing existing businesses (Godwin *et al.*, 2006:624). To better understand the challenges faced by women in male-dominated industries one must consider that women are seen as more helpful, caring, kind, sympathetic, insecure in carrying out their duties - either at the family level or work place - so that gives the perception that they are the weaker sex whilst men are perceived as the stronger sex because they tend to be more aggressive, confident, independent, and command respect both from family and colleagues. (Eagly and Karau, 2002:547; Godwin *et al.*, 2006).

Women are perceived as the weaker sex and so are disadvantaged; this comes from the effect of gender issues in the society (Tillmar, 2007:85). Matters of gender are important in that, when they are not handled properly, the self-esteem of women entrepreneurs is negatively affected.

As a consequence this presents challenges to the achievement of success in entrepreneurial activities (Mboko and Smith-Hunter, 2009:160). There is a general understanding that men find more favour from society (Mordi *et al.*, 2010:9). Women in construction are often seen as the wrong gender for construction work, not only because of the manual labour required in the sector, but also the requirement to have sufficient physical strength to carry out jobs on site (Aulin and Jingmong, 2011:1). In some African contexts, women are basically confined to the four walls of the house, performing domestic work - subordinated by their culture (Okeke, 2000:48; Mba, 2015:446).

Female entrepreneurs working within culturally biased, gender-based and male-dominated industries have continued to be a prominent topic for discussion in the attempt to secure capital for new ventures. But in some countries - including Japan, India and Iran - culture and tradition is held in high esteem by men and does impacts on the way business is conducted but it does not affect or pose any particular challenge to women entrepreneurs who work in male-dominated industries (Godwin *et al.*, 2006:624).

According to Eagly and Karau (2002:574), “a potential for prejudice exists when social perceivers hold a stereotype about a social group (i.e., women) that is incongruent with the attributes that are thought to be required for success in certain classes of social roles (i.e. female entrepreneurs)”. For years the construction industry has been overwhelmingly rated as a male-dominated industry. We find on many work sites that women construction workers are not welcome and are usually confronted with discrimination based on their gender and also anti-women attitudes (Buthelezi, 2012:1). Due to stereotyping, women entrepreneurs find it difficult to associate with males in the construction industry, and they therefore lose the experience of what it entails to be part of the construction industry.

### **2.7.3 Inability to get support**

The inability to get family and friends to support one's profession is a major obstacle making it difficult for women entrepreneurs to start a construction-industry business venture (McKay, 2001:153). The positive attitude of partners could assist in support for the entrepreneurial activities of women as this helps to strengthen the network of women in establishing business ventures (Kim and Ling, 2001:207). Role models, poor career advisers, literature based on gender recruitment and poor educational experiences have been cited as barriers against

women's entry into the industry (Gale and Skitmore, 1990:13). Gale (1994: 24) suggests that if given the opportunity to learn about the industry in terms of careers, women could enter and also excel in the industry. On this premise, it is recommended that equal opportunities needs urgent attention (Latham 1994: 30).

In a study on the question of family support for women entrepreneurs, respondents reported that the lack of support from their husbands constituted a barrier to their entrepreneurial activities, making it difficult for them to make headway in their desire to start up and maintain businesses within the construction industry (Mordi *et al.*, 2010:15). The support of family and friends as well as not leaving the spouse has been the most positive factor in the support of women entrepreneurs in achieving good results in their entrepreneurial activities (Roomi *et al.*, 2009:283). Sandberg (2003:410) is of the opinion that women entrepreneurs who have support and are stable are likely to have an advantage over those who do not. The lack of this support can make things even more difficult in the construction industry.

#### **2.7.4 Balancing family and work**

In some recent studies investigating women entrepreneurs balancing work and family, it is observed that women entrepreneurs tends to go for jobs that will be flexible enough for them to be able to carry out their family obligations and at the same time get satisfaction from their place of work (Buthelezi, 2011:39). However, this is not often the case when choosing a profession in an industry such as the construction industry. This makes it impossible to reach their full potential, as they are not able to combine both. The nature of construction work requires more time on the job (Buthelezi, 2011:39). In line with the above it appears that women enter into entrepreneurial activities in order to balance work and family. In addition, the choice as to how, where and when work is done helps women entrepreneurs with family commitments. Furthermore the long hours of work create problems that women entrepreneurs are campaigning about; they need flexibility in order to achieve their full potential (Buthelezi, 2011:39).

Women wanting to start a business find the level of family commitment an obstacle since it requires time. Balancing work and family responsibilities poses a threat as this causes disunity problems in many families (Roomi *et al.*, 2009:280). Men usually combine work with family, leaving much of the household care responsibilities to women. This often forces women into a

situation where they have to choose between work and family (Roomi *et al.*, 2009:280). This is particularly true for women in the construction industry who find it extremely difficult to manage both family and work, especially when they have to be on the construction site for long hours, since site areas are usually far from home and children need to be cared for and or picked from school (Devi and Kiran, 2014:4935). This in most cases is a cause of exhaustion for women entrepreneurs who engage in such activities. Very few women choose to work long hours on site for the purpose of gaining experience, which is usually an important part of a number of requirements for promotion, ultimately resulting in a position of authority at the expense of their family (Dainty *et al.*, 2000a:114; Devi and Kiran, 2014:4938).

Helmes (1997:18) cited in Buthelezi (2011:39), identifies 3 reasons why women entrepreneurs tend to start their own venture, “personal freedom, security and satisfaction”, the ability to balance work and family is seen as it helps women entrepreneurs to decide on their workplace – often close to their houses or from home. According to Amaratunga *et al.* (2006:564) whether you are a manual worker, a professional or a site worker, the location is always subject to change which can mean travelling great distances It can even mean months away from home; such a situation cannot be managed by female entrepreneurs since child care and family responsibility is most times carried out by the woman. Furthermore, findings show that men in the construction industry have greater chances of rapid career progression and promotion while women on the other hand are more concerned with creating an enabling environment to accommodate both family commitments and their work (Dainty *et al.*, 2001:302; (Devi and Kiran, 2014:4939).

### **2.7.5 Access to human resources**

It is a widespread perception that most women lack the basic requirements to manage the early and growth stages of a new business (Department of Trade and Industry, 2005:6). Resources such as human capital in the form of occupational and formal experience are essential assets when entering into entrepreneurial activities. This experience enhances the chances of success of the business and often women entrepreneurs don't have this experience (Department of Trade and Industry, 2005:6). Entrepreneurs are agents of change. Part of their makeup includes the ability to develop innovative ideas when making business plans. These plans are likely to succeed if the entrepreneur has sufficient start-up capital through the help of a bank loan (Roomi *et al.*, 2009:279). However the shortage of dedicated and skilled labour employees is cited as

a key challenge for women entrepreneurs who are lesser equipped with knowledge from the construction industry (Roomi *et al.*, 2009:279).

There is reluctance of men to work under the leadership of women since they feel they are better leaders than women in business (Roomi *et al.*, 2009:279). Furthermore, empirical findings show that “attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions are viewed as being top barriers to women in wanting to access the construction industry” (Worrall *et al.*, 2010:279). Similarly, businessmen also tend to be reluctant to work under the leadership of women in businesses since they consider themselves better leaders (Roomi *et al.*, 2009:279). However, men who have worked with women in other trade areas such as bricklaying and carpentry are usually of the opinion that women are capable of doing all nature of jobs. These men agreed that women are capable of even lifting heavy equipment - something that is considered something that women cannot do (Dainty *et al.*, 2001:297). The promotion of equality in construction must offer mutual benefit to both men and women if they are to be successful (Dainty *et al.*, 2001:297).

Hence, if women entrepreneurs do not have the necessary human capital they will have to overcome greater obstacles in starting a successful entrepreneurial activity within the industry. Women entering into the construction industry should be seen as a way of improving the work force and they should have no hindrance in becoming knowledgeable in the field rather than these factors being seen as a requirement for social justice (Agapiou, 2002:704). Men and women are definitely not identical but are equally important to the workforce as they deliver and make positive decisions though in different ways to the betterment of their various establishments and in the construction industry at large (Agapiou, 2002:704; Evers and Sieverding, 2014:95).

#### **2.7.6 Low self-esteem**

It is considered that another barrier to women entrepreneurship is their lack of self-esteem (Mordi *et al.*, 2010:9). For women who are considering starting small businesses in the construction industry, the lack of self-confidence can contribute to them not wanting to go into established professions and wanting to be self-employed due to fear of failure (Brindley, 2005:156). In starting a small business, men have more self-esteem than women and for women this quality stands in the way of them achieving their objectives (Brindley, 2005:118).

The construction industry is mainly seen as a male dominated industry, and, in the industry, there are many more successful men than women as a result of the challenges peculiar to the industry which ranges from entry level (recruitment) to inflexible working conditions and the poor public image of the industry (Radhlinah and Jingmong, 2008:1).

It is more difficult for women to compete with their male counterparts when it comes to promotions. This is not because they are not qualified, but due to the industry's image which considers men more superior. This which is often a cause of low esteem in most women (Amaratunga *et al* 2006:562). Accessing essential initial capital for a small construction business may be difficult consequent to low self-confidence exhibited by many women (Kirkwood 2009:118). Therefore low self-esteem hinders the growth of women entrepreneurs in establishing businesses and most importantly for the current study, in the construction industry due to gender stereotyping.

#### **2.7.7 Lack of knowledge and experience**

Women can also be hindered in launching a new small businesses is the fact that they do not have sufficient knowledge of the industry (Smith-Hunter, 2009:160). Little or nothing is known about the type of job opportunities available for women in the construction industry and even less about the required qualifications in getting in. (Amaratunga *et al*, 2006:563). According to key findings by Powell *et al.* (2005:41), if students are educated about the industry, regardless of gender, "they will possibly have experience of an industrial placement and it likely to facilitate the transition into the construction industry". Having experience is very necessary and there is a broad division into prior work experience and entrepreneurial experience. In starting a business venture entrepreneurial experience is very necessary as it forms the basis of many successful business ventures. It is argued that in starting a new business, having experience is an added advantage (Barringer and Ireland, 2008:260).

Women in construction are often seen as the wrong gender for construction work not only because of the manual labour involvement, but also the need for the physical strength required to carry out these jobs on site (Radhlinah and Jingmong, 2008:1). Thus, if these women do not get access to the construction industry it becomes impossible for them to get the experience necessary to start their own small construction businesses. It follows that experience is very important. Prior work experience is an added advantage in laying a solid business foundation.

This statement is supported by Nieman *et al.* (2009:29), (Soriano and Castrogiovanni 2012:333), who are of the opinion that entrepreneurs who have gained previous work experience before starting their own businesses have higher survival rates.

Female entrepreneurs can also face gender differences in launching their new business. Reduced growth due to lack of previous work experience is also a major challenge (Carter, 2000:326). In the establishment of a small business, previous work experience is very necessary. In terms of working experience, there are differences between women and men entrepreneurs in both the start-up phase as well as the operational stage (Mboko and Smith-Hunter, 2009:160).

It is believed that men have an advantage in gaining expertise when compared with women. This puts women in a predicament when launching a new business since often they do not have previous work experience; very problematical when considering this statement “The effective delivery in construction depends on the skills that are gained in carrying out the job” (Construction Industry Board, 1996:10). There is a positive need for career counsellors to provide young people and potential women entrepreneurs with guidance (Francis and Prosser, 2014:39). With the right skills and prior work experience starting a small business in the industry is not difficult. However, women entrepreneurs who do not have this prior work experience and relevant skills will find it difficult to start new ventures in the construction industry.

### **2.7.8 Socio-cultural views**

A further factor that prevents women from starting a small business is the perception that they should be at home attending to domestic duties (Okeke, 2000:48; Mba, 2015:446). Consequently they are discouraged from starting up small businesses. In the African context custom and tradition decrees that the primary objective of women is to take responsibility for the household, taking care of the children, including while they work if they are employed (Al-Lamky, 2007:59). More problems will arise if emphasis is placed on the perception that the primary role of women is nurturing (Kim and Ling, 2001:204).

Furthermore women are usually confronted with choice of either taking care of the family or following their professions (Al-Lamky, 2007:59). “Subculture’ is taken to mean the cultural



traits, beliefs, and lifestyle peculiar to the construction tribe. One of the most important factors seems to be the need for a person to fit in to the subculture (Greed, 1997:12). It is argued that the values and attitudes held by its members have a major influence on their professional decision-making, and therefore ultimately influence the nature of 'what is built' (Greed, 1997:12).

These factors have continued to work against women achieving the realisation of starting a new venture since culture and tradition demands that they should carry out domestic duties. It is important to note that in the short term, it is difficult to deal with societal perceptions negatively affecting aspiring women entrepreneurs (O'Neill, 2008:7). For this change to occur, a system should be put in place for the drivers of change to recognize companies and firms who operate equal opportunity policies and who also improve the current working condition of female construction entrepreneurs. This improvement includes combining work with family time which is usually disrupted due to long hours of work on site, and also providing equal pay package including giving them awards and also incentives (Construction Industry Board, 1996:4). However this cannot be achieved overnight.

### **2.7.9 Lack of adequate training**

Training is an essential part of entrepreneurship and this aspect develops knowledge on planning, organising, and also controlling entrepreneurial activities. However training is lacking among women entrepreneurs. Women owned businesses lack strategic planning (Roomi *et al.*, 2009:280). The planning styles of women entrepreneurs in running a small business are usually formless and improper (Sandberg, 2003:410). For proper sustainability of a business, various styles of strategic planning need to be in place to assist the business to grow. There has been no training of women entrepreneurs in taking strategic decisions (Roomi *et al.*, 2009:279). Supporting this argument Neiman *et al.* (2009:35) states that training is very important in achieving high performance in running small businesses in areas of specialised disciplines of entrepreneurship which women entrepreneurs lack. So in running a successful small businesses women need to be trained (Roomi *et al.*, 2009:280).

The construction industry does not have a good track record when it comes to putting in place equal opportunity provisions and it continues to suffer under-representation and discrimination - most importantly when it comes to women entrepreneurs (Toor and Ofori, 2010:1). Women

entrepreneurs find it difficult to acquire necessary training in the field, training that will help develop their business (Affholder and Box, 2004:6). Therefore women entrepreneurs are not equipped to run a small business in the construction industry.

The challenges pointed out above, suggests the reason most women construction entrepreneurs find it challenging at entry level and even more importantly they find it difficult operating small businesses in the construction industry.

The following section suggests strategies for overcoming some of the constraints, recommending that men and women should form teams, government intervention through creating non-gender-based policies and finally by strategic mixed-gender partnering.

## **2.8 STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING THESE CHALLENGES**

The number of women-owned businesses has been on the increase for the past decade and has drawn public attention. Despite the rate of increase, women-owned businesses still lag behind compared to the male when measured by income and sales (Carter and Allen, 1997:148). Some possible reasons why women owned businesses remain small, (1) the lifestyle of women entrepreneurs hinders their intentions (choice) and (2) women entrepreneurs face social and cultural barriers that make it almost impossible to grow their businesses (Carter and Allen, 1997:149). Studies and the general news media have continued to agree that female entrepreneurs in the corporate world have, in recent times, been struggling against a glass ceiling over wage discrimination and advancement opportunities (Affholder and Box, 2004:6). Female entrepreneurs in non- traditional field say that entrepreneurship has given them a way to put away the issue of gender bias entirely and compete on the same level with men in their industry (Attila *et al.*, 2004:407).

### **2.8.1 Men and women forming teams in new ventures**

The research done on entrepreneurship has always centered on individual entrepreneurs but the fact is that new businesses are often formed by a team of individuals who come together to create new businesses - usually in the form of partnership (Godwin *et al.*, 2006: 626). Studies in the past suggest that ventures created by teams of male and female entrepreneurs tend to

have a solid and good foundation, Timmons and Spinelli (2009) are of the opinion that team based ventures are more successful than ventures created individually, while Kamm *et al.* (1990:10) suggest that “venture capital firms are more likely to consider proposals from team-based ventures rather than from solo entrepreneurs”. Even though these studies were carried in the early Ninety’s, in recent studies this factor has resurfaced. (Kamm *et al.* 1990; Timmons and Spinelli, 2009; Brush *et al.* 2014). Regardless of the accuracy of stereotyping, there is an opinion that there are some roles women don’t fit in to be successful, so when it comes to males and females coming together to form alliance success can follow (Godwin *et al.*, 2006:629; Brush *et al.* 2014:15).

In terms of skills, the idea of women partnering with men is an easy entrance into any business situation. Nevertheless such partnering is not for social reasons but a strategic option for a conducive, harassment free working environment in the male dominated industry. In as much as men are forms of requisite resources for women to climb up to the ladder of success in a non-traditional industry, while women on the other hand are optional resources for men in the industry, it is emphasized that this is so only in a male-dominated industry (Godwin *et al.*, 2006:635).

Research has also shown that business relationships formed with the other gender has a sound basis. The success achieved through collaborating with men provides the female entrepreneur a legitimate place in the industry and gender-related harassments will be curtailed (Ibarra, 1992:635). From the perspective of mixed-gender collaboration, the strategic decision to partner with a man could give women entrepreneurs a competitive edge in the male-dominated industry (Ibarra, 1992:635). In as much as women partners with men in a male-dominated industry it doesn’t imply that this is the only strategy there is for women (Godwin *et al.*, 2006:635). In another view of studies that have been done, Toor and Ofori (2010:2) puts it thus that, “to be successful in their career and gain leadership positions, women often have to emulate men and this reinforces the patriarchal system that discriminates against women and people of color”.

### **2.8.2 Government intervention**

Studies have shown that to achieve a high growth and representation in the construction industry, the perception of women as belonging only to traditional sectors has to change and

must also be addressed by government through various strategies (Margaret *et al.*, 2008:2). In transforming and cutting across gender based stereotyping in the construction industry, the following strategy should be looked into:

- The support of network structures in assisting women to grow in the construction industry by providing basic education, business skills, training, mentoring and support systems. Developing and facilitating information technologies that will help in closing the gap between business enterprises that are already established and new businesses. In so doing they form networks of businesses and help new enterprises to grow.
- To recognize the barriers to the advancement of African women and put in place programs targeted to empower female entrepreneurs in the construction industry. These should be included in future agendas. That is to say when policies are being made, women should be involved in the policy making so their views will be known and implemented not men who assume to know what women entrepreneurs needs to empower themselves in the construction industry.
- To encourage women entrepreneurs to enter into the construction industry and to make a positive contribution to infrastructure delivery. The training of women in the non-traditional sectors such as construction should be prioritised. Women entrepreneurs in construction should be encouraged and it should be remembered that change is constant and to achieve that change the struggle must go on and women must fight to for their own space in society.
- To create gender awareness in the work place and to also see to the need of women having a good and women-empowering environment in which to work (Buthelezi, 2012:3). Women do not need to act like men or do the same things men do in order to gain respect.

The following section looks at the various forms of assistance that is been put in place by government to help women entrepreneurs in reaching their full potentials.

## **2.9 FORMS OF ASSISTANCE THAT WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS NEED**

Women entrepreneurs are evolving in the business environment globally, a potential means of increasing the level of entrepreneurship in our society is by way of assisting these women with

necessary forms of support (DTI, 2005:7). Thus, aiding women entrepreneurs in reducing to the highest minimum the amount of challenges faced in starting and sustaining their businesses (Minniti *et al.*, 2004:13). There are general support programmes for both men and women entrepreneurs, although just a few are specific for women entrepreneurs however they benefit from both support programmes (Derera, 2011:77). Some of the support for women entrepreneurs consists of the following (though not limited to these);

- Mentoring programmes
- Education and general information
- Support for women entrepreneurs' business initiatives
- Women entrepreneurs are assisted in some financial aspects; and
- Network support structure (DTI, 2005:7).

From the forgoing we can infer that women are more advantaged in participating in more support programmes than men. Logically this is reasonable, since of times women entrepreneurs are faced with more challenges in the starting and sustaining of their small business. Often times this information is not dispersed properly, and the reality is that if the necessary information were circulated appropriately, many women would take advantage of these existing support programmes (Derera, 2011:77). Assenting to the above, Maas and Herrington (2006:42), are also of the opinion that government should make available to women entrepreneurs appropriate information about their policies.

In the pursuit of more ways of alleviating unemployment and poverty in South Africa, a white paper published 1995 declared support for female entrepreneurs, by introducing a support programme (Philip *et al.*, 2014:90). Furthermore, the Department of Trade and Industry are given the mandate to action the various government support programmes for entrepreneurs including women entrepreneurs. In developing SMME's the following institution were established, Khula Enterprise finance limited, Small Enterprise development Agency (SEDA), South Africa Micro-finance Apex Fund (SAMAF) (Philip *et al.*, 2014:87). However only a very few women know about these institutions and have access their products (Philip *et al.*, 2014:88). In 2006 a survey was conducted to establish whether women were aware of government support programs in four provinces including Pietermaritzburg only "7 out of 172 respondents were aware of development institutions in their province and of their products and

how to access them.” (Naidoo & Hilton, 2006:22). From the foregoing we can infer there is not much publicity on the availability of government support programs for entrepreneurs.

According to Sherman (2003 cited in DTI, 2005:8). In developed countries women entrepreneurs are more advantaged than women in the developing countries as they have greater chances of having formal training, and also get support from women mentors. Furthermore, there is an improvement in the number of women owned businesses and access to finance, however they still face obstacles based on old principles stemming from the fact there is a perception that women are not supposed to be in male dominated industry (DTI, 2005:8).

The international labour organization, works in over 25 countries including Africa, Asia, the Arab states etc. In their bid to help women entrepreneurs develop and sustain their businesses they have set up a project named Women Entrepreneurship Development (WED). They work with others partners in increasing the chances of success of women entrepreneurs by way of supporting them in launching, developing and expanding their businesses. This is achieved by modelling ideals way for business to do well and also intervening on their behalf to get financial services such as loans (International Labour Office, 2012:online).

Globally, the type of support women entrepreneurs is usually a blanket type of support irrespective of the sector operated. For example,

*“The Business Development program in the U.S helps women-owned business in starting and growing their businesses by way of offering one-to-one counselling, training, workshops, management and technical guidance which help in giving these businesses solid foundation that will help them in competing with other businesses”.*  
(U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010:20)

However in South Africa there is a specific body for women entrepreneurs in the construction industry named SAWIC (South Africa Women in Construction). This association helps to empower women entrepreneurs in gaining access to training, contracts, finance and also helps women to access networks within the construction industry (SAWIC, 2013). There are also other support groups for women entrepreneurs, such as South Africa Women Entrepreneurs’ Network (SAWEN), Technology for Women in Business (TWIB), Women in Oil and Energy Sector South Africa (WOESA), among others. (Derera, 2011:76).

## 2.10 CONCLUSION

The literature review study has illustrated the inadequate participation of women in the construction industry. Hence women entrepreneurs have great difficulty operating small businesses because the challenges are enormous (Adeyemi *et al.*, 2006:575). The process of entrance to the construction industry is mainly based on experience which women entrepreneurs lack since they lack training (Adeyemi *et al.*, 2006:575).

According to the established literature, women entrepreneurs who seek to start small businesses in the construction industry need to be informed about the type of industry they are venturing into, since construction is one of the major male-dominated industries, and women are perceived to be venturing into an unfamiliar territory. The liberal feminism theory states that men and women are equal. However this is not the case in the construction industry as women are still under-represented due to challenges ranging from limited networking, inflexible and long working hours, cultural traits, and discrimination to mention just a few.

In a key note address delivered by Kotli Molise – Editor of the construction industry development board CIDB Concrete Women. She commended the effort women entrepreneurs are making in the construction industry despite the challenges they face. Molise further discussed that, in as much as women entrepreneurs in construction do not constitute a huge portion of the total workforce, as at 2008, women entrepreneurs constitute 40% of the total contractors in grades 2 to 5 of CIDB and some are achieving higher grades (Molise, 2008). This shows that women entrepreneurs are working tirelessly to overcome and succeed in the traditionally male-dominated world of construction.

Government agencies should make more effort in promoting the cause of women entrepreneurs in construction so that barriers that have been created by these challenges can be managed and controlled accordingly. Studies have shown that for high growth and representation in the construction industry, the perception of women as belonging to non-traditional sectors has to change and must also be addressed by government through various strategies (Margaret *et al.*, 2008:2). There are a number of government support programs for women entrepreneurs in general and also specific sector/industry programs for women to obtain assistance in developing their small businesses. However it is not enough to have these institutions and not been able to access or know how these institutions can help start, sustain and develop small

businesses been establishment by entrepreneurs. The relevant bodies should create awareness on how they can be reached and also their functions.

The literature review highlighted the under-representation and marginalization of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry as well as the various constraints hampering the entry, retention and running of a successful business by women entrepreneurs in the construction sector.

The next chapter (3) discusses the methodology that was employed in order to collect information for this study.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The previous chapter outlined a variety of literature about the study topic and focused on a review of secondary data that helped in understanding the other work done around the topic under discussion. This chapter is focused on the procedures and methods adopted for the purpose of obtaining the data for the current research.

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

“Research is a process that involves obtaining scientific knowledge by means of various objective methods and procedures” (Welman *et al.*, 2005:5). This method is used in a systematic way in uncovering solutions, or answers to questions, and also the difficulties that the researchers have identified. An excellent research methodology accomplishes the purpose and objective(s) of a research, as it makes sure that the research is rooted with a clear purpose and specifies the resources available for use (Blanche *et al.*, 2006:34).

This chapter focuses on the research design, sampling techniques, population size as well as methods of data collection used in the current study. The method to be deployed in analysing the collected data is also discussed. The relevant ethical issues are considered in this study, especially as it involves human subjects who are also discussed. Also, the different strategies adopted in order to enhance the validity and reliability of the study is also given due attention in this chapter. In order to establish the appropriate background and give a direction to this chapter - by linking it to the discussions in previous ones - this chapter begins by restating the purpose of the study as well as the research objectives.

#### **3.2 PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences that women entrepreneurs face in the construction industry with a focus on their motivation for starting small businesses in this industry, the challenges they encounter at start-up and in running their businesses given the male-dominance of the industry, how they deal with these challenges, and the support they receive and need to grow amidst the challenges of the industry.

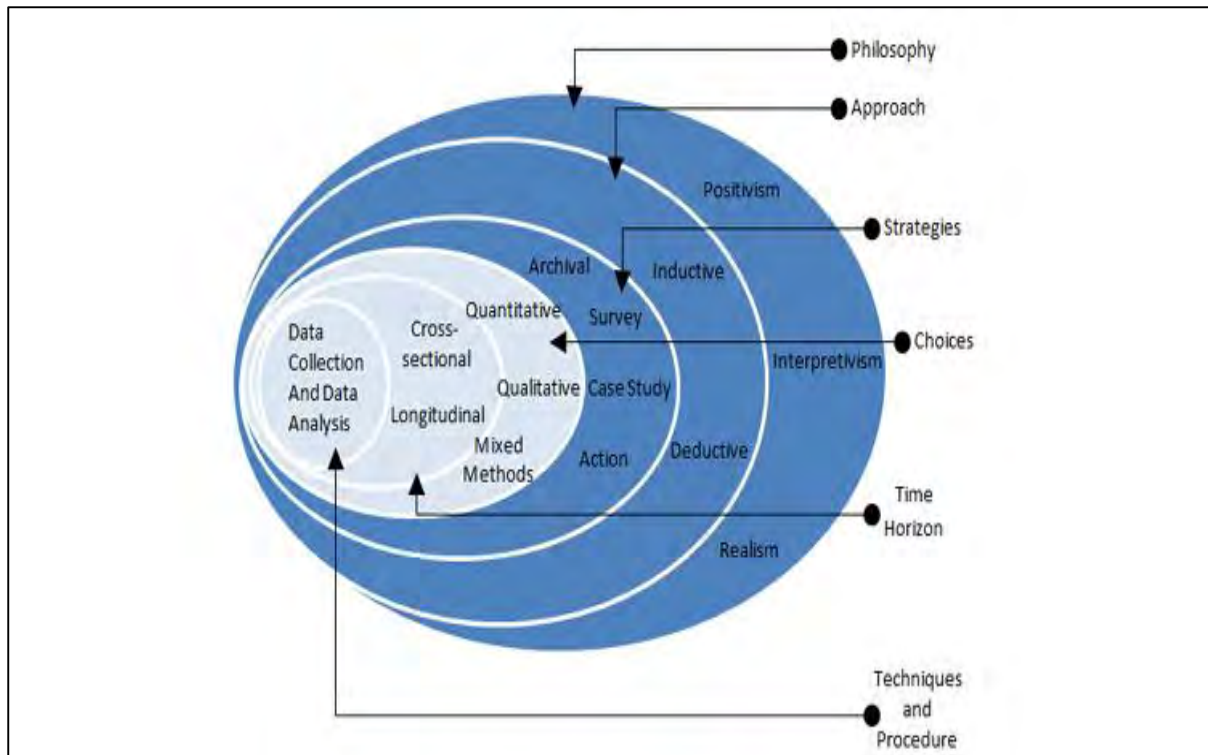
### **3.2.1 Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

- To identify the factors that motivates women to establish small businesses in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.
- To investigate the characteristics of women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.
- To explore the challenges faced by women in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.
- To examine the strategies used by women entrepreneurs to overcome some of the challenges that they face in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.
- To understand the form of assistance that women entrepreneurs in the construction industry need in order to reach their full potential in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

### **3.3 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY**

In this section, the researcher discusses the research philosophy that underlies this study and investigates the researcher's basic assumptions. The understanding and outline of research philosophy used is based on Saunders *et al.* (2009:108). Saunders *et al.* (2009:108) uses the image of an onion to illustrate the relationship between the various research philosophies and their related approaches and methodologies, amongst other things.



**Figure 3.1: Research 'onion'**

Source: (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:108).

Saunders *et al.*, (2009), describes positivism as a research philosophy commonly used in the natural sciences, which seeks to be objective and free of bias. Ontologically, positivists believe that reality is objective and independent of the researcher; in terms of epistemology, positivism believes that objective knowledge can be obtained and attempt to use methods, often quantitative, which seek to be free of the researcher's bias and puts a clear axiological distance between the researcher and the researched (Clark, 2005:10; Klende, 2008:16; Bryman, 2012:32).

Pragmatism as a philosophy focuses on multiple methods in addressing a specific question, rather than ontology or the nature of truth. Within this philosophy, arriving at a conclusion through a multiplicity of methods is put forward as a way of arriving at conclusions with integrity. This is because the limitations of a single method in accessing knowledge about the world are addressed by the use of several methods (Creswell, 2009:75).

This study adopted interpretivism as its research philosophy. This paradigm takes a rather subjective ontology that, unlike positivism, does not see reality as objective and independent, but as constructed. What is perceived as reality is constructed over time through interaction

and communication. Thus, from this perspective, qualitative research methods are favoured as a way of accessing knowledge about reality. Thus, this research philosophy acknowledges the researcher cannot be separated from the researched. The experience, values and beliefs of the researcher can influence the research process and findings, and vice versa. Within this paradigm therefore, meaning is uncovered through in-depth dialogical engagement between the researcher and the researched, and the findings are not treated as absolute or objective, but as mediated and subjective interpretations of the researcher (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:106; Boksberger and Melsen, 2011:230).

This paradigm is considered the most appropriate one for this study because it focusses on the “experiences” of women which are subjective and can only be accessed through a dialogical method, such as in-depth interviews, and later interpreted by the researcher. Moreover, the study employs a feminist framework which deals with gender issues in society. Recent studies in gender have widely theorized it as a social construct rather than a natural reality. Thus, the phenomenon of male dominance and its surrounding beliefs and practices are more appropriately treated within the interpretivist paradigm that acknowledges its constructiveness with consequent fluidity and instability.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design can be defined as “a strategic framework for action as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research” (Blanche *et al.*, 2006:34). From the definition given, it can be said that research design serves as the blueprint from which the research and its processes can be deducted.

In view of this, this study uses both descriptive and exploratory research design. Exploratory research design is used to make “preliminary investigations into relatively unknown areas of research” (Blanche *et al.*, 2006:44). This is made possible by employing an adaptable, open and inductive approach within the research to allow for understanding of insights into the phenomenon in question (Blanche *et al.*, 2006:44).

This study is mainly qualitative and utilizes in-depth interviews to produce data. However, during the interview process, specific questions were administered to produce quantitative data on participants’ motivations for starting a business and the challenges faced by women in the construction industry. This was to achieve a deeper understanding and to consolidate findings

from in-depth interviews. This was helpful in analysing the experiences of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry. It is argued that the quantitative and qualitative methods should complement each other instead of substituting them because the qualitative method is used often in understanding the meaning of the numbers that has been produced by the quantitative method (Yeasmin and Rahman, 2012:160).

### **3.5 SAMPLE FRAME**

According to Welman and Kruger (2005:57) a sample frame is a comprehensive detailed grouping of all the members that form the underlying basis of the study group. Fowler (2002:993-994) notes that a sample frame is a method that is used in defining the researcher's interest in the population. In other words a sample frame is where the researcher is able to choose the targeted population from the entire population. In view of this, the sampling frame for the current research is made up of all women operating small businesses in the construction sector in Pietermaritzburg. These women include architects, quantity surveyors, and civil engineers, operating small businesses in Pietermaritzburg. According to Hamilton (2006:3) and Oseghale *et al.* (2015:156), the construction industry is a unique sector that covers a wide range of activities. The industry engages in both construction and reconstruction. The construction aspects include building and civil engineering works and more, while reconstruction deals with renovations, repairs carried out in existing residential or commercial buildings. Furthermore, installing floors and landscaping, roofing, water drilling, sandblasting, painting among others, are also areas of reconstruction (Hamilton, 2006:3; Oseghale *et al.*, 2015:156).

Since researchers do not gain easy access to respondents that will be needed to select a sample (i.e. the target population), the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce (PCC) was used as a point of departure in identifying women that are involved in the construction industry since they are relatively small in number but are not easy to locate. With the list obtained from the PCC, the researcher was able to identify the locations where these women could be found.

### **3.5.1 Sampling procedure**

This is the procedure used in choosing the research respondents. Sampling technique and sample size is included under the sample procedure and is discussed below.

### **3.5.2 Sampling Technique**

There are two types of sampling techniques and they are categorized into non-probability and probability sampling techniques. Probability sampling is the primary method that is used in selecting a large, representative sample. Non-probability sampling method is used in conditions where one cannot select the kind of probability samples used in comprehensive studies (Barbbie and Mouton, 2011:166). These in turn indicate that the probability that a single item under study has unequal chances of being counted in the sample (Welman *et al.*, 2005:56).

The snowball sampling procedure is used in identifying the women operating small businesses in the construction industry and this is under the non-probability sampling method. In this method the selection of individual is not shaped by the numerical views of randomness (Blanche *et al.*, 2006:139). Snowball sampling method is the process of approaching a few individuals from the population, these individual then acts as informants and identifies other members such as acquaintances, colleagues or friends (Welman *et al.*, 2005:69). Since the women in the construction industry are relatively low in the number and difficult to locate, the snowball sampling technique is of importance to help locate these women entrepreneurs by way to getting one woman and she introduces the researcher to other women in the industry.

### **3.5.3 Sample Size**

In selecting a suitable sample size, there are no actual guidelines to be followed. The important issue is the link between the sample procedure and the emphasis laid on the research in view (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:234). Arguing further, Saunders *et al.*, (2009:234), are of the view that the understanding and validity of the data collected has more to do with the interpretation of the data collected than the sample size. The sample size for this study was targeted at thirty (30) women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry. Since little is known about women in construction in Pietermaritzburg, and the number of women operating small businesses is relatively small the snowball sampling method was deployed in identifying these women.

This sample size is justifiable because it is in line with feminist research approaches of using in-depth interviews to extract the silent voice of women (Hamilton, 2013:95). Gender issues are multidimensional, therefore there is need to understand women from a gender perspective in order to help bring out the burning concerns that women entrepreneurs face in the construction industry (Hamilton, 2013:9). Therefore, with in-depth interviews, it is impossible to have a large sample without substantial resources. Furthermore, most researchers who use in-depth interviews as a method of data collection halt the process when saturation of data is reached.

Furthermore, Saunders *et al.*, (2009:234) states “For research where commonality in a fairly homogenous population needs to be understood, 12 in-depth interviews should be adequate but for a heterogeneous population or where the research question is broad based, 25 to 30 interviews are recommended”.

The table below shows similar studies’ sample sizes that can be used as a benchmark for the appropriateness of the sample size that was adopted for this study.

**Table 3. 1: Justification for the sample size deployed in this study**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Sample sizes</b>
<b>Martin (2004)</b>	The experiences of women in male-dominated Professions and Environments in South Africa	5
<b>Aylward (2007)</b>	Traditional and Non-Traditional Female Entrepreneurs: An Exploration into what Influences their Selection of Industry Sector	4
<b>Martin and Barnard (2013)</b>	The Experience of Women in the Male-Dominated Occupations: A Constructivist Grounded Theory Inquiry	5
<b>Choudhury (2013)</b>	Experiences of Women as Workers: A Study of Construction Workers in Bangladesh	12

(Source, Author's own illustration)

The sample size for this study, sixteen (16) is however appropriate considering the findings in table 3.1.

#### **3.5.4 Methods of data collection**

For the purpose of this study, it is imperative for the researcher to know the type of data collection method that is needed in identifying the sample and which will also support the realisation of the purpose, questions, aims and objectives of the study. This part of the research design concerns itself with the use of measurement. This study utilizes both secondary and primary data sources. The secondary source is a document study, while in-depth interviews assisted in getting primary data.



Primary data is the information that was used for the purpose of the research and was collected through various instruments such as interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations and questionnaires (Neel, 2008:1). In order to generate the primary data for this research, in-depth interviews were conducted. The in-depth interviews were conducted among sixteen (16) women entrepreneurs in the construction industry. While secondary data consists of the work of other researchers who have done similar works around the topic of discourse which helped in the development of the previous chapter using the internet, books and journal articles to source for information.

According to Yeasmin and Rahman (2012:158), triangulation can be defined “as a process of verification that increases validity by incorporating several viewpoints and methods” (Yeasmin and Rahman, 2012:160). For the purpose of completeness, this study used triangulation by incorporating several views from literature study, and methods such as qualitative and quantitative approach. Triangulation was further used for a deeper understanding of the study under investigation. Triangulation is used to improve the reliability and validity of the research or the evaluation of the finding (Yeasmin and Rahman, 2012:158).

### **3.5.5 Measuring instruments**

Primary data was collected using in-depth interviews. Quantitative data collected, was derived from the in-depth interview using a Likert scale table. The data collected was used to deepen the understanding of women’s experience investigated. Furthermore, the in-depth interview helps in bringing out those burning issues which affect women when spoken about, since often they (the respondents) do not know how to express themselves well enough in writing. A brief explanation of the measuring instrument (in-depth interview) is given below:

### **3.5.6 In-depth interviews**

In-depth interviews being a form qualitative research method was deployed for the collection of primary data. This type of research tool was used for flexibility purposes in order for the interviews to be flexible for the purpose of follow up questions concerning further areas that are brought up during discussion (Patton and Cochran, 2002:12). This is distinct from a

structured interview where the questions are closed ended not giving opportunity for any form of expansion.

Gender processes are complex therefore the study of women needs to be viewed from a gender perspective in order to bring out the silent or burning issues that women entrepreneurs are facing in the construction industry (Hamilton, 2013:91). Hence the in-depth interview is used as a form of collecting data. Interviews are “a natural form of interacting with people” (Blanche *et al*, 2006:297), and are therefore flexible tools that can lead to more important information as the need arises (Dawson, 2007:30). In-depth interviews facilitated the direct interactions with the respondents (women in the construction industry). Interviews are conducted face to face and the responses were recorded with help of a recording device, also through personal notes taken down by the researcher. The time frame for the in-depth interview is approximately thirty minutes to forty-five minutes per respondent. In building a strong background to the phenomenon the researcher visited a few construction sites where the women are currently carrying construction duties.

In-depth interviews also helped in bringing out the day-to-day experiences of these women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry. Furthermore, in understanding their plight, and in so doing more information is obtained from these women in detail.

### **3.5.6.1 Structure of in-depth interview guide**

Various forms of in-depth interview guides can be used to obtain rich data (Turner III, 2010:756). For the purpose of this research, an informal conversation interview was employed. Interviews provide in-depth information relating to participants’ viewpoints and experiences. The in-depth interview guide was divided into seven (7) sections which are discussed below.

#### **3.5.6.1.1 Section A: Demographic information**

Section A of the in-depth interview guide sought to find out the demographic information of respondents such as, the age category of respondents, educational qualification, professional qualification and employment history of participants in the construction industry.

#### **3.5.6.1.2 Section B: Business Profile**

The researcher sought to find out the category to which the business belongs within the construction industry, since the industry engages in both construction and reconstruction of roads, buildings, bridges amongst other things. Furthermore in this section, data about the year the business was established, how start-up capital was raised for the business, and the number of employees were collected. The researcher also sought to find out the growth rate of the business during the past five years in terms of turnover, market share amongst others. Since the tendency for small businesses to grow is suggested to be of much lesser concern to the owner-managers than the need for the business to survive. Participants were asked to give details of projected growth rate in the next five years and whether they have put in place any succession plans.

#### **3.5.6.1.3 Section C: Motivating factors**

Section C gathered information regarding what motivated women to start their businesses in the construction industry. Respondents were also asked to rank the motivating factors that they talked about in order of importance. These motivational factors are drawn from several key authors such as Kirkwood (2009), Jayawarna *et al.* (2010), Buthelezi (2011), Renko *et al.* (2012), Uddin and Kanti (2013), Stephan *et al.* (2015) who researched on motivation for women starting new businesses.

#### **3.5.6.1.4 Section D: Characteristic of women entrepreneurs**

This section required participants to respond to questions designed to find out whether they believed that women in the construction industry are different from women in other industries. In order to better understand some of these characteristics of these women, the works of Chyi-Iyi and Paul (2009), Barringer and Ireland (2010), Fillis and Rentschler (2010), Xavier *et al.* (2012), Jaafar *et al.* (2014) and Sutanto and Eliyana (2014), provided a lot of insight into these characteristics.

#### **3.5.6.1.5 Section E: Challenges facing women Entrepreneurs**

The questions in this section were designed to find out the type of challenges women faced at the start of their businesses. Also, participants were asked to rank in order of importance how these challenges affected them. Additionally, the researcher inquired from the participants the challenges they were presently facing, which they also ranked in order of importance. Information on these challenges were gathered from the works of different authors such as Becker-Blease and Sohl (2007), Barringer and Ireland (2008), Nieman *et al.* (2009), Mboko and Smith-Hunter (2009), Roomi *et al.* (2009), Mordi *et al.* (2010), Toor and Ofori (2010), Soriano and Castrogiovanni (2012), Buthelezi (2012), Lofstrom *et al.* (2014), Devi and Kiran (2014) and Mba (2015) for a better understanding into these challenges.

#### **3.5.6.1.6 Section F: Strategies needed for overcoming the identified challenges**

Since understanding the challenges women face in the construction industry was a major objective, this section of the in-depth interview guide sought to find out how these challenges were managed by the respondents. Questions such as how participants overcame these challenges, and whether they thought the strategies they used could work for other women in the same industry. Finally, participants were asked what other strategies could be used by women from other sectors.

#### **3.5.6.1.7 Section G: Support for women entrepreneurs in the construction industry**

The last section of the in-depth interview guide, aimed to develop an understanding of the kinds of assistance that women entrepreneurs in the construction industry believe they would need. Thus, participants were asked questions regarding their awareness of available possible external support, whether or not they have benefitted or are currently benefitting, and how, and whether they were aware of and/or belonged to networks that could benefit them and their businesses.

### **3.5.7 Pretesting**

A pre-test is done in order to identify any weakness and also to validate the research instrument regarding the design and content of the research instrument (Sekaran, 2010:159). An interview guide was constructed for this study. A small group consisting of five female entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry was interviewed. This was done in order to ensure that the participants understood the questions and to confirm whether the questions were clear enough in order to avoid ambiguity. With the feedback received from the participants as requested, and based on their comments; the questions were edited and rearranged as recommended.

## **3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Validity, objectivity and reliability are essential measures in qualitative research (Schreier, 2012:34). The requirement of objectivity is that no matter who does the research, the interpretation and findings should be the same; “validity and reliability are ways of demonstrating and communicating the rigour of the research process and the trustworthiness of research findings” (Roberts and Priest 2005:41). Specifically, reliability testing measures a particular method such as the in-depth interview that is used in getting the necessary information needed for the study, and this determines the degree to which related results will be obtained through different circumstance assuming nothing changed (Roberts and Priest 2005:41).

### **3.6.1 Validity**

According to Welman *et al* (2005:142), validity refers to the degree to which the findings of the research accurately represent the reality of the phenomenon. Validity is also defined as something that is without doubt based on truth (Silverman, 2010:275). In most studies, the conclusions of the findings are usually drawn from well-investigated data and not just from selected ideas of researchers. In order to ensure validity, the researcher analysed both the qualitative data obtained through the in-depth interview and the quantitative data using the likert scale questions in line with the study’s aims and objectives. The two different data sets ensured that findings from one method is verified and strengthened by the other.

### **3.6.2 Reliability**

Consistency and truth are the attributes associated with reliability (Cooper and Schindler, 2003:231). The outcome of the research is dependable and usually qualitative in nature because of the process that is used in the interpretation of the raw data (Silverman, 2010:286). Trustworthiness of the research finding is also associated with reliability thus making the research findings dependable. In this study, the in-depth interview is used for the purpose of collecting primary data from women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry. Through these in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to get first-hand information, since gender process are complex, the in-depth interview was able to bring forward those silent voices describing the challenges women entrepreneurs face in the construction industry. Recording while the interview was going on helped with accuracy because, it is difficult to take notes and also listen attentively as some details would have been omitted

#### **3.6.2.1 Forms of reliability**

##### **(a) Test-retest reliability**

In the testing for reliability, the same instrument that was in use in conducting a particular research can be used again and if the results are the same then the reliability can be said to be achieved (Bailey, 1994:73). Studies also shows that outcomes of research findings can be said to be reliable if a research instrument that was used in collecting data is used again and produces same results (Kuma, 2010:181).

In strengthening the degree of reliability and validity, this study thoroughly investigates relevant literature on the subject under investigation. This discussion was guided by the information gathered from various literature study on the subject matter. To further achieve reliability and validity, a combination of methods that ensures triangulation was used. This enabled the researcher to compare data collected using qualitative method and quantitative method in order to achieve consistency.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **3.7.1 Qualitative Analysis**

This section of research design is crucial because the data analysis methods that in use should be in line with data collected. This is so, in order to produce a representation of data, which supports and helps with the realisation of the research questions and objectives. Data analysis process usually follows this sequence: data preparation, coding and capturing (Blanche *et al.*, 2006:326). This is essential in research as it processes a huge volume of raw data, which must be sorted out and it allows for easier representation and interpretation of the statistics that will be collected. The process of coding allows the researcher to organise the information obtained from in-depth interviews into various categories of emerging themes. The subsequent stage in data analysis is coding the data. This includes transforming the raw data into information that can be used (Blanche *et al.*, 2006:326). This codes act as a tag that signifies reasonable suggestion as to the raw data that was gathered through the course of the research while in the field (Welman *et al.*, 2005:214). This helped the researcher to organise the information received through in-depth interviews.

The researcher utilised Microsoft Excel software for the purpose of analysing the quantitative data set. In illustrating the result findings, pie-charts, graphs and tables were used where applicable

Qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews were analysed thematically and comparatively. Thematic analysis is oftentimes used in analysing qualitative data. Thus, this study employed thematic analysis, which is done by constantly identifying emerging themes in the course of data collection. Dawson (2007:119) argues that in thematic procedure, “the data collection and analysis takes place simultaneously” with background reading also making part and parcel of the analysis process (Dawson, 2007:120).

#### **3.7.2 Quantitative Analysis**

Microsoft Excel software was used by the researcher to analyse the quantitative data set. This software was used mainly for analysing the result derived from the Likert scale questions. The data was analysed using pie-charts, graphs and tables where used where applicable.

### 3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

An ethical application was made to university of KwaZulu-Natal's Ethical Committee in order to obtain clearance for this study. The application for the Ethical clearance was approved with a protocol number (HSS/0799/014M). A copy of the Ethical Clearance Approval letter is attached in the Appendix.

Ethics in research “concerns the responsibility of researchers to be honest and respectful to all individuals affected by the research studies or their reports of the studies’ result” (Gravetter and Forzano, 2009:98). The researcher notified respondents about the purpose of the study and asked for their consent before the survey was administered. The consent form includes four main principles that are to be met before it can be considered as an informed consent and they are as follows:

- Respondents were provided with all important material concerning the research
- It is important that participants have full understanding and knowledge about what they are expected to do
- Making sure that those respondents are aware of the fact that participating in the study is absolutely voluntary and they are free to withdraw
- The informed consent ought to be in formal writing
- With all this in mind, before a questionnaire is given out for completion, the researcher provided all possible participants with clear and accurate information on all aspect of the research procedure (Blanche *et al.*, 2006:72).

The researcher notified the respondents about the purpose of the study and they were asked for their consent before the survey was administered. Informed consent forms were given to all participants to ensure willing participation. This form explicitly informs the participants that they can decide to discontinue if at any stage of the research they feel uncomfortable and wish to discontinue. Additionally, the forms address issues of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy. Respondents are assured that the results of the study will be accessible to them if required.

The researcher and respondent relationship should be characterized by trust and integrity. It is very important to be honest with the respondent about the purpose of the research. However, sometimes the duty of confidentiality entails that some important findings will have to be suppressed.



### **3.9 CONCLUSION**

The research methodology is concerned with how the researcher intends to collect information required to respond to the research questions and to achieve the research objectives. This chapter discussed the research methodology adopted for this work. The chapter provided the justifications for the different techniques and tools adopted and further delivered explanations of what these techniques and tools entailed. The techniques and tools used have also been provided in relatively specific detail. These include the measurement tool namely, the use of in-depth interviews with the help of an interview guide, published works and literature, as well as previous relevant dissertations concerned around the topic of discussion.

The sampling techniques used were also discussed which include probability, non-probability and snowball sampling methods. The sampling frame which includes sample size that was drawn from the target population. Raw data was analysed thematically. This chapter also noted the importance of validity and reliability in research and attempted to show how these instruments enhanced this study. Finally, it addressed the issue of ethical considerations for the study.

The next chapter (4) presents and discusses empirical findings.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Chapter 3 outlined the methodology employed in this research, highlighting the methods of data collection. This chapter presents and discusses the empirical findings of the data collected from the in-depth interview.

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Although the study was mainly qualitative, quantitative data was also collected for statistical and triangulation purposes. This chapter is divided into three (3) sections. Section A contains the demographic data of respondents such as their age category, educational qualification, duration of business, and category of business, how capital was raised for the business, and number of employees. This is presented using pie charts and graphs. Section B presents data on the business profile of the respondents, and Section C discusses data directly related to research aims and objectives. The quantitative data presented is also drawn on to triangulate some with data from in-depth interviews discussed in sections B and C, in terms of points of convergence (and divergence).

#### **4.2 RESPONSE RATE**

Based on the recommended minimum sample size relative to specific study population in qualitative research, thirty (30) women entrepreneurs in the construction industry were contacted. However, only 16 in-depth interviews were conducted. The response rate from the interviewed women was 53.3%. The low response rate may partly be due to the period over which the data was collected. The researcher was told it was a very busy periods for prospective participants as they were bidding for tenders in various municipalities, making it difficult for the researcher to get hold of them. Nonetheless, sixteen (16) respondents is a reasonably good and manageable number for this study given that it is a Master's dissertation and has certain time constraints. Moreover, being primarily a qualitative study, the focus is more on the depth and quality of data rather than the quantity. Thus, a smaller and more manageable number of

respondents allow the researcher to spend more time with respondents, learning about their experiences in the construction industry at a deeper level.

Furthermore, since the participation was voluntary, only sixteen (16) women made themselves available out of the thirty (30) participants initially envisaged. It involved a large number of telephone calls as well as many unproductive trips to their places of work and construction sites. Even though appointments were made with the research participants, a great number of them failed to honor their appointment. The researcher continuously made efforts to reach the research participants after so many failed scheduled meetings. A limitation is that women architects and quantity surveyors were supposed to be part of the research participants. However this was not achieved, as the interviewed women are not in this field possibly due to style of referrals

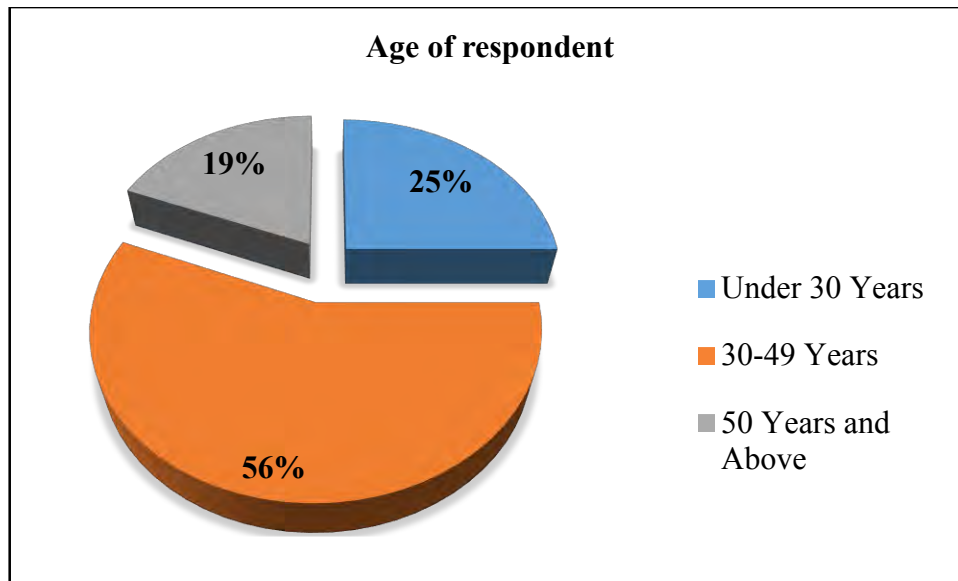
#### **4.3 SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS**

##### **4.3.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents**

Sixteen (16) women who operate small businesses in the construction industry were interviewed in order to collate background information on the following: age of respondents, educational qualification, years of operating the business, business category, source of business capital and number of employees. The results and findings were interpreted using charts and graphs.

##### ***Age of respondents***

In order to establish the personal information regarding the age groups of the women entrepreneurs interviewed, research participants were asked to tick the age category within which they fall. This was done to ascertain the age women entrepreneurs start to engage in entrepreneurship. Figure 4.1 below shows the ages of respondents.



**Figure 4.1: Age of respondents**

The majority (56%) of women entrepreneurs were within the age category of 30 – 49 years. This is followed by the under 30 category, which represents 25%, and the age category of above 50 representing 19%. These findings are in agreement with a large body of literature about the women’s entrepreneurial participation age (e.g. Sarri and Trihopoulou, 2004; Nieman and Nieuwenhuizen, 2009; Chetty, 2009; Xavier *et al.*, 2012). For example, Xavier, *et al.*, (2012:28) concurs that participation in entrepreneurial activities is often between the age brackets of 25-34 years followed by the 35-44 years age bracket. These age brackets vary from region to region and also from industry to industry.

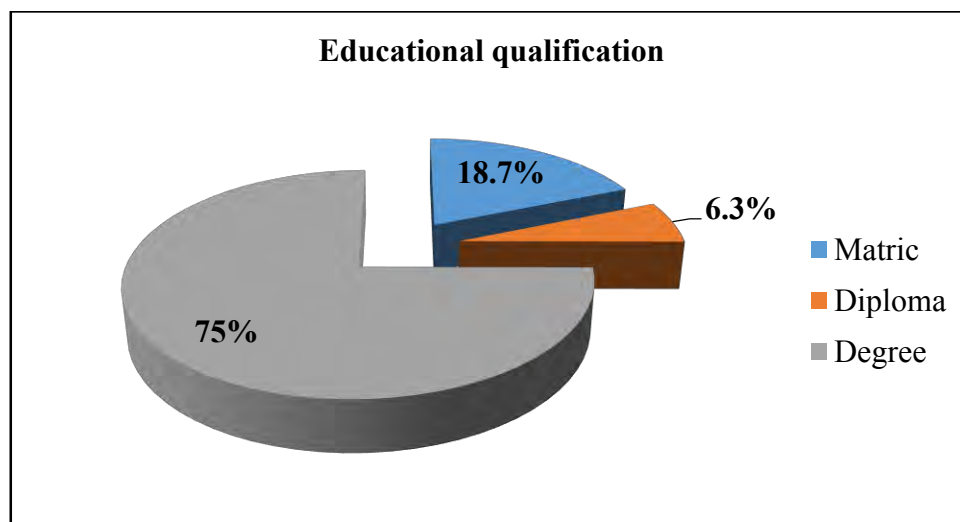
According to Wangle (2009:20) and Bowen *et al.* (2014:1273), not all individuals can participate in the construction industry because physical strength is required for all people regardless of age and gender. The situation is worse for women who are considered by society to be the weaker gender, which makes it difficult for them to be accepted in the industry (Wangle, 2009:20; Bowen *et al.*, 2014:1273). This assertion was illustrated by Respondent eight (8) when she stated that:

*“Most men do not like to work with us on site... They say we are not supposed to be in this industry because this industry belongs to men... Women are weak and they do not have the physical strength that is required in this industry”.*

Figure 4.1 shows that a large percentage of women who operate small businesses in the construction industry are relatively young, and some in their youth, which implies that they are energetic and do possess some qualities such as physical strength, which is considered relevant for participation in the construction industry.

### ***Educational qualification***

Gorman *et al.* (1997:1), cited in Buthelezi (2011:45), stated that, education often serves as a foundation in relation to new venture creation or business start-up, where acquisition of knowledge and development of applicable skills is attained. In this regard, participants were asked about their educational qualifications. Figure 4.2 displays the educational qualification of respondents.



**Figure 4.2: Educational Qualification**

Figure 4.2 shows that the majority of interviewed women entrepreneurs had university degrees, which represents 75% of the respondents. A total of 18.7% of respondents had Matric certificate qualifications, while 6.3% of the sampled women attained tertiary diploma qualifications. Studies have shown that women who have college and tertiary education or more are more likely to succeed in business (Boden and Nucci, 2000:361; Justo *et al.* 2015:776). It was found that the educational qualifications of most of the participants were not related to the construction industry except for two (2) respondents. One of the respondents reported that she worked as a site supervisor during which time she developed interest then

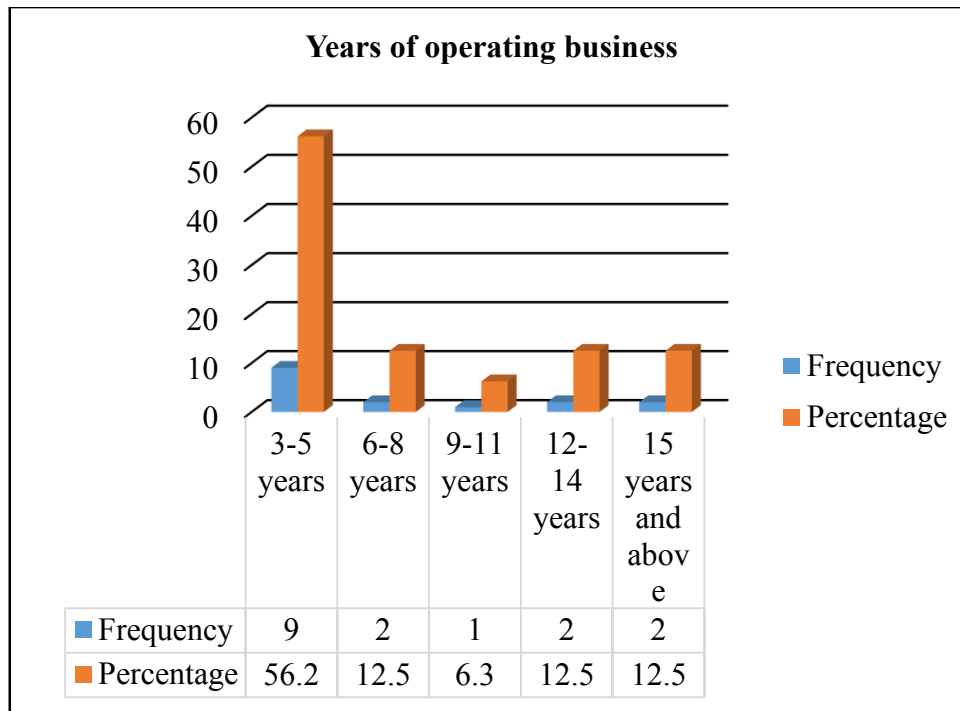
went ahead to study civil engineering to gain more knowledge. Respondent three (3) associated her success to having prior knowledge of the industry when she said that:

*“I opened my own construction company... Since I already have a background knowledge of how the construction industry works also the educational qualification is an added advantage”.*

In other words, it is suggested that women who have industry based degrees and working experience within the construction industry had more advantage than those without prior knowledge or industry based degrees.

### ***Years of operating business***

The business lifespan for both female and male entrepreneurs is given as 5 to 10 years, and goes higher if the individual has working experience and a full university degree. Women entrepreneurs are often disadvantaged due to lower quality education and a lesser amount of work experience (Boden and Nucci, 2000:361; Justo *et al.* (2015:776). To test this belief on the study participants, they were asked how long their businesses had been operating. Figure 4.3 displays the years the business has been operating.



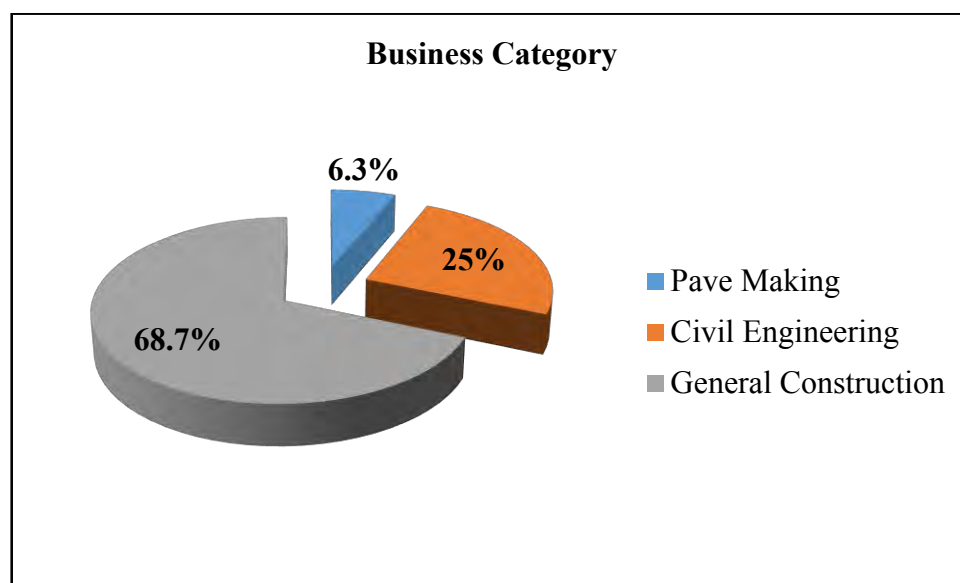
**Figure 4.3: Years of operating business**

The majority of women entrepreneurs, nine (9) respondents, indicated that they had been operating their businesses for 3-5 years, representing 56.2%. Two (2) had operated their small businesses for 6-8 years representing 12.5%, another two (2), 12.5%, had been operating their businesses for 15 years and more. Finally, one (1) respondent said she had been operating her business for 9 – 11 years representing 6%.

The figure above shows that 56.2% of respondents had spent three to five years in the construction business. This symbolizes that, most respondents were relatively young in the construction business and their businesses could not be said to be well established. Studies have shown that the survival rate for business start-ups in the construction industry within the first four years is low (Small Business Development Center, 2015). This is attributed to incompetence and a lack of the relevant experience within the industry. Supporting the above statement, Barringer and Ireland, (2008:260) are of the opinion that having experience is necessary and that this experience can be divided into two, namely: prior work experience and entrepreneurial experience. In starting a business venture, entrepreneurial experience is paramount as it forms the basis for a successful business venture. It has been argued (Carter, 2000:326; Nieman *et al.*, 2009:29; Soriano and Castrogiovanni 2012:333) that in starting a new business, having experience is an added advantage.

### ***Business category***

The construction industry is one of the key industries that drive the economies of many nations including South Africa (Hussain, Millman and Matlay, 2006:584; Oseghale *et al.* 2015:156). The industry has its unique characteristics, the industry engages in both construction and renovation. The term construction covers a wide range of activities, which include building and civil engineering works (Hamilton, 2006:3; Oseghale *et al.* 2015:156). In establishing the particular department in which the business operated, participant were asked to mention the category of construction industry within which their businesses fall. Figure 4.4 illustrates the category where the business operates from.



**Figure 4.4: Business category**

In the business category, Figure 4.4 shows that majority of respondents 68.7% were engaged in general construction, 25% of respondent were involved in civil engineering, and 6.3% were into pave making. The construction industry is involved in both construction and reconstruction; renovations and repairs are carried out on existing residential or commercial buildings; the industry is also involved in the building and repair of roads and bridges (Szymanski, 2007:1; Vanags *et al.*, 2015:69/70). Furthermore installing floors and landscaping, roofing, water drilling, sandblasting, painting and other activities, are some of the areas that fall within the construction industry (Szymanski, 2007:1; Vanags *et al.*, 2015:69/70). Evidence from Figure 4.4 shows that the majority of respondents were involved in general construction,

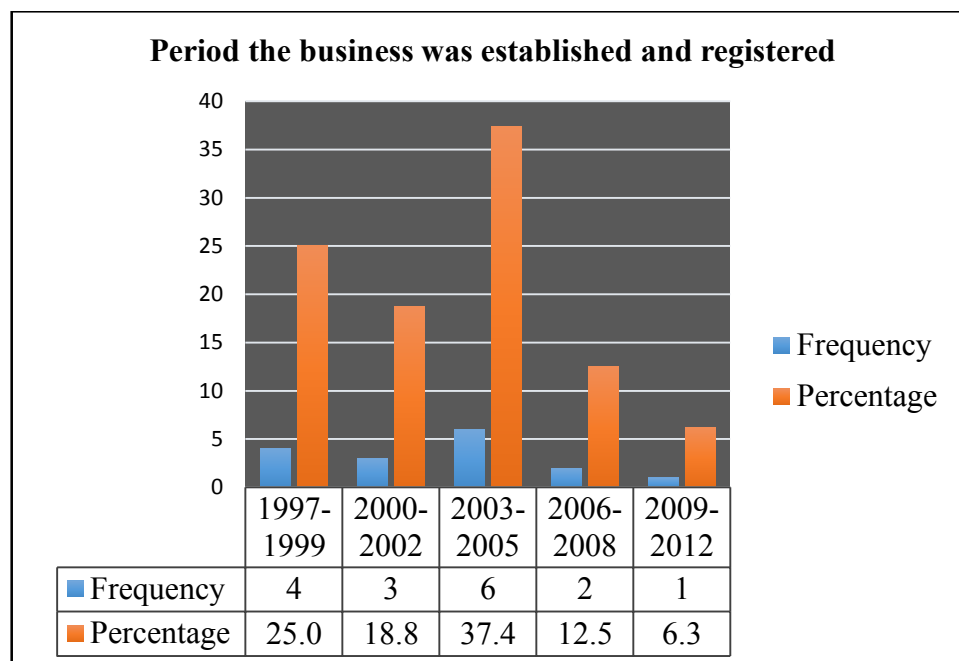


where they carry out all construction related duties such as: building, renovations and repairs on new and existing residential or commercial buildings. Furthermore, installing floors and landscaping, roofing, water drilling, sandblasting, painting and other activities, are also areas of construction industry which could mean that they did not specialize in a specific area but offered whatever industry-related services they could. As Respondent eight (8) puts it:

*“I get contracts in all aspects of construction whether to renovate an existing building, or road construction”.*

#### ***Period the Business was established and registered***

The purpose of this question was to know the exact period the business was established and registered. Figure 4.5 indicates the period the business was established and registered.



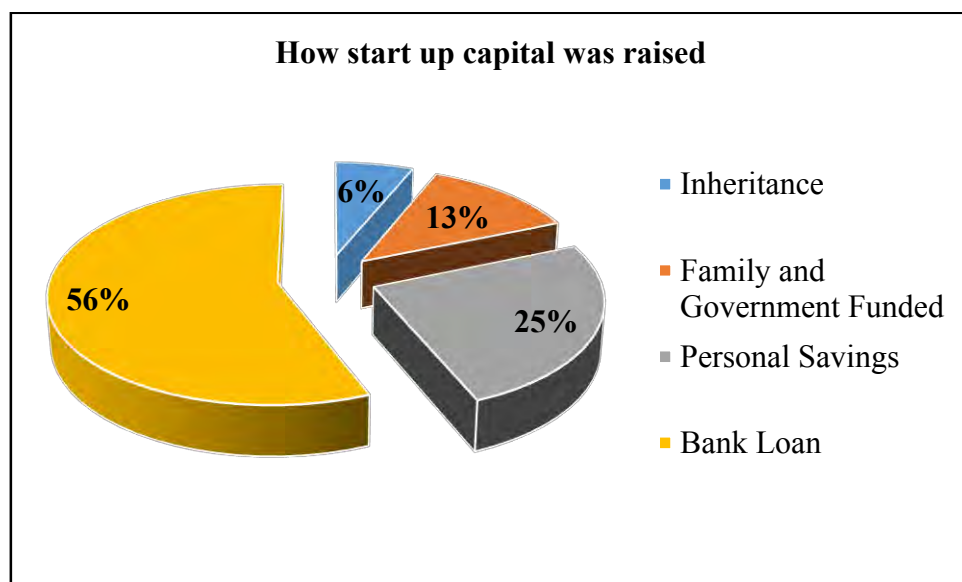
**Figure 4.5: Period the business was established and registered**

Figure 4.5 shows the periods in which participants' businesses were established and registered. The figure shows that 37.5% of businesses were established and registered between 2003 and 2005, 25% of the respondents' businesses were established and registered between 1997 and

1999, 12.5% established their companies between 2006 and 2008, and 12.5% established between 2009 and 2012.

### ***How start-up capital was raised***

Businesses run by women are growing rapidly by the year, but little is known about access to finance from private investors. Studies suggest that women's access to 'angel' financing is lower than that of men, but both have equal opportunity to receive loans (Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007:506; Gallant, 2015:4). In this regard, research participants were asked how they were able to raise capital for their new businesses. Figure 4.6 displays how start-up capital was generated for their various businesses.



**Figure 4.6: How start-up capital was raised**

Figure 4.6 shows from the respondent data, how the participants sourced their capital in the establishment of their small businesses in the construction industry. The pie chart in Figure 4.6 shows that majority 56% obtained their start-up capital through bank loans, 25% of respondents acquired their capital from personal savings, 13% raised start-up capital through the help of family and government funded programs, only 6% acquired their capital through inheritance. Studies have shown that most businesses acquire their start-up capital through loans from financial institutions (Pisani and Yoskowitz, 2008:47).

A more recent study carried out by Buthelezi (2011:86), indicated that most start-ups used personal savings in starting their business ventures. The author goes on to mention that this is

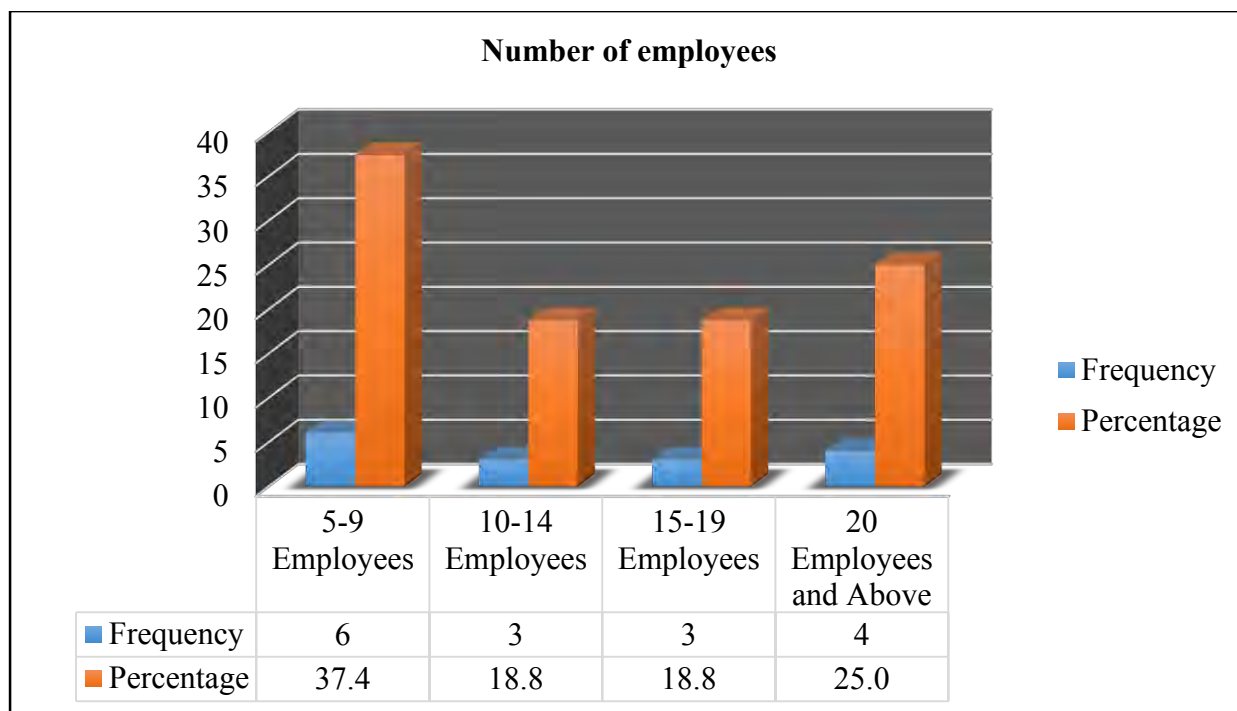
followed by the use of bank loans as a source of capital for new business ventures. Furthermore, Becker-Blease and Sohl, (2007:506) and Gallant (2015:4), suggest that getting ‘angel’ financing is comparatively much more difficult for women than their male counterparts. This ‘angel’ financing is financing provided by individuals or entities called ‘angel’ investors who provide start-up capital for individuals or corporate entrepreneurs in exchange for stake in the recipient business entities. Women will likely go to women ‘angel’ investors and are likely to get funding to an extent (Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007:506). However this is dependent on the industry in which the business is operating.

The construction industry is a capital intensive industry therefore acquiring loans to capitalize such ventures usually requires high collateral security, hence presenting some difficulty for the businesswomen seeking financing from the financial institutions (Hung *et al.*, 2002:436; Lofstrom *et al.*, 2014:235). It has been highlighted by the authors It has been highlighted by the authors (Hung *et al.* 2002; Lofstrom *et al.* 2014) that, sometimes this failure to acquire financing from finance houses may also be due to the lack of knowledge on the part of some of the women entrepreneurs who might be failing to present their proposals or business plans in ways that might convince the finance houses that they will be a favourable risk.

Figure 4.6 evidently shows that majority of respondents acquired their start-up capital through bank loan from financial institution which is agreement with the review of literature. However some studies suggest that some financial institutions do not offer loans to prospective entrepreneurs since often not all individuals have the requisite collateral.

### ***Number of employees***

Organizations vary in size and the number of employees; this is often dependent on the survival time and profitability of the business (Guiso and Rustichini, 2010:2). Regarding this, participants were asked the number of employees working in the establishment. Figure 4.7 displays the findings from question seven (7) where respondents were asked to indicate how many employees they have in their various establishments.



**Figure 4.7: Number of employees**

Figure 4.7 indicates that 37.4% of interviewed respondents employed between 5 to 9 employees, 25% of respondents employed 20 employees and above, 18% of respondents employed between 10-14 employees and the other 18% respondents employed 10-14 employees. According to Guiso and Rustichini (2010:2), organizations vary in sizes and the number of employees, the size of an organization is often dependent on the survival and profitability of the business. Therefore if the business is big but with no profit or turnover, the business serves little purpose since the aim of most businesses is for profit generation. (Businesses can of course be run for some time on an unprofitable basis with a long-term objective of becoming profitable.) For example, individuals run online businesses and achieve great success. Hence, it can be said that the size of a business has little to do with total number of employees, but much to do with the profit and turnover generated. Therefore, the amount of employees does not always justify the size of the business. A business may be big but still employ about 5 to 9 staff while a small business can employ more than nine 9 staff.

#### 4.4 SECTION B: BUSINESS PROFILE OF BUSINESS AND EXPERIENCES

This section presents analyses and discusses data regarding three areas of participants' business and experiences. These include whether they had any employment history within the construction industry prior to establishing their own businesses; their business growth rate in the past five years and the projected future of their businesses in the next five years. Three (3) themes emerged from the analysis of the responses of participants which are 1) Most women entrepreneurs enter the industry with no prior experience, 2) Business growth rate is not stable and uniform, and 3) Women entrepreneurs in the industry have a [potentially] bright future. It should be noted, in the following discussions of these themes, that respondents provided more than one response to most of the questions; therefore, the total sum of responses does not necessarily equal the number of participants.

##### 4.4.1 Lack of prior work experience among women entrepreneurs

**Table 4.1: Employment history in the construction industry**

Themes	Frequency of responses
No prior work experience in the construction industry	9
Prior but limited experience in the construction industry	5
Had worked in the construction industry	2

In order to establish whether they had prior work experience in the construction industry before establishing their own businesses, participants were asked to narrate such employment history if they had any. Based on their responses, three categories of participants emerged about their prior work experience as well as other relations they had with the industry before entering it as small business owners. As illustrated in table 4.1, the first category consists of the majority of participants (9); they had no prior work experience in the construction industry but entered it from various backgrounds such as teaching in areas unrelated to construction, legal practice and management of retail stores. This is illustrated in the words of Respondent five (5):

*"I started as a dramatic art teacher in Pietermaritzburg and worked in the school for 7 years. I went into construction with little or no idea of the industry".*

The second category (5 participants) had prior but limited experience in the construction industry. They had worked only in administrative positions. This is exemplified in Respondent 2:

*“I have a diploma in management. Worked for a construction firm for 10 years as an administrative officer”.*

The third category includes participants (2) who did work in the industry prior to establishing their own businesses, they worked as site supervisors and further went on to add more knowledge through university education, as captured in the words of respondent three (3):

*“Although I had a degree in finance but I never used it to work since it was difficult getting a job. A friend told me to come and work with her on sites as a site supervisor supervising the labourers. It was a family business that made it easy to get the job. As time went on I developed interest so I went back to the university to study civil engineering”.*

These findings show that while the majority of women enter the construction industry without prior working experience within the industry, those who have working experience did not gain such experiences from working on construction sites but from administration work. Administration work allowed them to gain valuable knowledge about the workings and operations of the industry and how it is managed. In a sense, it positions them to have some knowledge of the workings of the industry, which those who have only worked on site would not have. They would have acquired valuable knowledge about the management of the industry that they brought into the management of their small businesses within the construction industry. However, their experiences are limited in terms of construction site-specific practical knowledge such as in handling site equipment, among other things. This implies that their productivity level will be low because they do not possess the required site-specific skills in carrying out construction jobs on sites.

This agrees with previous studies that confirm that women are stereotypically considered physically too weak for the construction industry, which is seen to be only for men who are strong and able to lift heavy equipment on sites (Wangle 2009:20; Bowen *et al.*, 2014:1273). Aulin and Jingmond (2011:1), for instance, argue that generally, within the construction industry, there is a wide-ranging perception that women are the wrong gender to be conducting the manual labour on-site. This is why women who find themselves in the industry are assigned administrative duties, which are considered to require very little or no physical strength.

#### 4.4.2 Instability and lack of uniformity in business growth rate

Participants were asked to discuss their business growth during the past five years in terms of turnover, employees, market share, profit, assets and any other thing they wished to talk about. The aim was to find out, using these measures, whether their businesses were showing signs of growth and profitability or otherwise in the past five years. Responses varied on this issue. The majority of participants started their businesses in a small scale with several different challenges – such as lack of capital, male dominance and high cost of construction equipment – and experienced some amount of growth over the past five years. Two respondents articulated this experience thus:

*“It was difficult at the beginning because there were no workers/labourers and the start-up capital was not enough to keep the business going... whenever we get jobs we have to outsource and most times we don’t make profit”* (Respondent three (3)).

*“Business as we all know always have a rough beginning especially in the industry where men are more dominant. More so the cash flow is very slow hence business not going smoothly”* (Respondent one (1)).

Other participants consider the beginning and performance of their businesses over the past five years to be on the average because the income generated through business was not stable. As Respondent five (5) puts it:

*“The past 5 years has not been stable in terms of income however the business is not running at a loss so I will say in all the business is running on an average performance”.*

Some participants had to deny top management earnings and pay only junior staff in order to keep their businesses going.

A small number of responses, however, suggest that few participants had a good start and had seen a substantial rate of growth over the past years, as illustrated in the words of participant three (3):

*“Business has indeed been good because I will say for myself I had an idea of the industry so I knew my ropes and knew how to cast my net despite the fact that it is male-dominated industry... The company has witnessed tremendous growth in all aspect ranging from profit to market share”.*

These respondents associated their growth to their knowledge of the industry, availability of running capital and prior work experience in the industry. Affirming this, Barringer and Ireland, (2008:260), Soriano and Castrogiovanni (2012:333) argues that having experience is very necessary for business start up and growth. The authors further divided prior experience into two, namely; prior work experience and entrepreneurial experience. In starting a business ventures, entrepreneurial experience is vital as it forms the basis of a successful business venture. Furthermore, entrepreneurs who have gained previous work experience before starting their businesses have higher survival rates (Nieman *et al.*, 2009:29; Soriano and Castrogiovanni 2012:333).

What these findings demonstrate is that for most women entrepreneurs in the construction industry business growth is not stable but is determined by several factors. While a few may have experienced a good start and a stable and consistent growth over time, the majority of entrepreneurs had to wade through a number of challenges right from the beginning, experiencing some growth over time and sometimes facing threatening challenges. Although, the growth rate is not stable, what is common to the businesses is the survival of the businesses through the past five years.

The findings also suggest that women-owned businesses do not have uniform growth. This is a result of each business having its unique experience and challenges determined by factors such as the management style of the owner, its objectives, its strategies, and the environment it finds itself, amongst other things. Some experiences challenges such as lack of finance, and this may be similar across several small businesses, thus, business growth rate is not stable and is not uniform across all women-owned businesses in the construction industry. Women's business growth and ownership came across differently. Firstly, there is faster than average growth over time. So also, is a big gap in firm size in terms of number of employees and revenue generation (Women-Owned Business Report, 2014:5). The findings imply that the growth rate of interviewed women cannot be gauged equally since growth is determined by a number of factors.



#### 4.4.3 Women-owned businesses in the industry have a [potentially] bright future

**Table 4.2: Where do you see your business in the next 5 years?**

Themes	Frequency of Responses
Certain of future growth irrespective of challenges	11
Certain of future growth only if current growth rate is maintained	3
No response	2

The tendency for small businesses to grow is suggested to be of much lesser concern to the owner-managers than the need for the business to survive (Mazzarol, 2004:4; Levie and Autio, 2013:9; Stephan *et al.*, 2015:25). Thus, knowing participant's thoughts regarding the future of their businesses was important in this research in order to establish the extent of the growth prospect of the businesses, and whether having a vision for growth and deliberately taking steps towards that vision was of importance to women entrepreneurs in the construction industry rather than merely wanting their businesses to survive. Out of the 16 participants interviewed 11, which constitute the majority, were optimistic and believed that irrespective of their challenges, their businesses would grow in the next five years. They envisaged growth in different aspects of their businesses as expressed by Respondent four (4):

*“Presently we are working with approximately 30 permanent staffs and of course that was not how we started. So in 5 years’ time, the business will be branching into other fields of construction our main focus now is on road construction and renovations. In years to come, the establishment will be looking at other branches of construction such as building of houses because we have the capacity to do so”.*

While a small number of participants (2) did not share their thoughts on the future of their businesses, 3 participants were also optimistic about the future of their business but believed this to be possible only if the growth rate they were experiencing at the time of the interview was maintained. Hence, participant three (3) observed that:

*“If the business continues in this level of progress, the business will be listed in the Johannesburg stock exchange markets (laughing uncontrollably)”.*

It can therefore be concluded that most women entrepreneurs in the construction industry consider their businesses to have a bright future. This vision for a bright future may also be considered an important motivation for such women entrepreneurs in terms of helping them to start their businesses as well as preventing them from quitting. This level of optimism expressed by respondents affirms some assertions about the capacity of women to run small businesses and see to growth as a result of qualities they possess, such as leadership. Studies show female entrepreneurs as possessing better leadership styles and to be better leaders consequently running their business more successfully. According to Broomhall (2013:1), female entrepreneurs are more transformational than their male counterparts. Women care more about the development of their followers; they listen and stimulate them to think outside the box, women are more inspirational and more ethical.

#### **4.5 SECTION C: DATA DIRECTLY RELATED TO RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This section presents, analyses and discusses data directly related to specific research aims and objectives. Themes that emerged from the analysis of data are presented and discussed under relevant headings formulated from specific research objectives.

- The first research objective was to identify the factors that motivate women to establish small businesses in the construction industry.
- The second was to investigate the characteristics of women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry.
- The third was to explore the challenges faced by women in the construction industry.
- The fourth was to examine the strategies used by women entrepreneurs to overcome some of the challenges that they face in the construction industry.
- The fifth, to understand the form of assistance that women entrepreneurs in the construction industry would need in order to reach their full potential.

#### **4.5.1 Factors that motivate women to establish small businesses in the construction industry**

Respondent were asked to establish the factors, which motivates women to establish their small businesses in the construction industry. The three main themes that emerged in line with this research objective are that small businesses empower women, small businesses offer women opportunity to challenge patriarchy and that the construction industry is also appealing to women. In addition to the motivating factors discussed under each of these themes, other important motivations mentioned by participants are briefly highlighted.

**Table 4. 3: Factors that motivate women to establish small business**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Frequency of Responses</b>
To empower other women	5
To challenge patriarchy	4
That the construction industry is also appealing to women	3
Money	3
Personal growth Independent	3
To gain work experience	2
To explore the industry	1
To be own boss	1
Lack of job	1
Interest and love for the industry	1
Self-challenge and to be innovative	1
Family business	1

##### **4.5.1.1 Small businesses empower women**

Regarding the motivation of women entrepreneurs to start up small businesses in the construction industry - which they knew was male dominated and not very welcoming to women - analysis of research data shows that the desire to empower women emerged as a very strong motivation. Women entered the industry to empower themselves as well as other

women. Some women specifically stated their desire to empower themselves and other women as a motivating factor, such as participant nine (9), who said:

*“I started my small business in order to empower women. I worked for some time in the construction industry so I know the difficulty women encounter in getting jobs in areas such as construction industry and most importantly because they are most times not educated enough”.*

For other women, however, what they considered as empowerment was expressed in certain more specific terms. The desire to make money was one expression of empowerment as a motivation. A considerable number of women started business in the industry in order to make money because they see in the industry prospects for earning good money. This was clearly articulated by respondent fourteen (14):

*“...To make money and be financially responsible for myself...”.*

In relation to this, the respondent also highlighted the issue of financial stability which reflects the need for financial independence.

Personal growth and a desire for independence also came up strongly as a motivation. The construction industry was perceived as an avenue that could enhance their personal growth and allow them to become self-dependent, self-sufficient and free from the challenges that come with relying on others for their needs as well as being employed by others. Thus, according to Respondent one (1),

*“ I am developing myself in specific field since I do not have any knowledge in the field of construction, I enrolled for part-time courses and I attend programs organized by the industry”.*

Respondent four (4) expressed it this way,

*“I started my own business to be my own boss. The idea of having bossy male boss became less appealing”.*

Related to the desire for personal growth is the perception among women entrepreneurs in the construction industry that starting small businesses in the industry provides them the opportunity to challenge themselves and to be innovative, thereby enhancing their overall personal growth. Empowerment as a form of motivation could imply that when women

entrepreneurs are empowered, their business ventures are positively influenced, so also the industry and the country at large since the contribution of women entrepreneurship continues to speak volumes and extend from the economic sphere to include the wider process of social transformation.

The quantitative data set from the administered Likert scale questions (which was produced from the in-depth interview) also confirm the importance of the theme of empowerment as a strong motivation for women entrepreneurs in the construction industry (see tables 4.3 and 4.4). Participants were asked to confirm the importance of the motivational factors they have pointed out.

**Table 4.4: What motivated you to establish a small business?**

<b>Motivation for establishing a small business</b>	<b>Strongly disagree (1)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly agree (5)</b>
<b>Need for independence</b>	6.2%	0%	6.2%	6.3%	81.3%
<b>Balancing work and family</b>	6.2%	0%	10%	18.8%	65%
<b>Job Security</b>	18.7%	6.3%	56.2%	6.3%	12.5%
<b>Societal and community motivation</b>	0%	6.3%	50%	12.4%	31.3%
<b>Need for achievement</b>	6.2%	0%	0%	18.8%	75%
<b>Family roles</b>	6.2%	0%	50%	31.3%	12.5%
<b>Wealth creation</b>	0%	6.2%	31.2%	18.8%	43.8%
<b>Status and recognition</b>	37.4%	56.3%	0%	0%	6.3%
<b>Challenges (dissatisfaction of previous job e.g. need for achievement and independence) Among others.</b>	18.7%	18.8%	50%	0%	12.5%

Participants' responses showed high preference for factors such as need for independence (81.3% strongly agree and 6.3% agree) need for achievement (75.0% strongly agree and 18.8% agree), wealth creation (43.8% strongly agree and 18.8% agree), and balancing work and

family (65% strongly agree and 18.8% agree). The less motivating factors are, job security (12.5% strongly agree and 6.3% agree), societal and community motivation (31.3% strongly agree and 12.4% agree), status and recognition (6.3% strongly agree and 0% agree), family roles (12.5% strongly agree and 31.3% agree) and lastly challenges (dissatisfaction of previous job for example, need for achievement and need for independence among others (12.5% strongly agree and 0% agree).

### ***Need for independence***

Table 4.4 shows that 81.3% of respondents strongly agreed, while 6.3%, of the respondents agreed that the need for independence is often linked to the motivation for establishing a small business. 6.2% of the respondents are both indifferent, and strongly disagree. These findings, therefore, reveal that the majority ( $81.3 + 6.3 = 87.6\%$ ) of the respondents agreed that the motivation for establishing small businesses is often associated to the need for independence. Relating to these findings, a large body of literature agrees that the need for independence is mostly said to be a major reason that entrepreneurs launch new businesses. This is so because it gives entrepreneurs the ability to be in control of one's personal work life and time. Furthermore, they are autonomous in decision making and are capable of combining both personal life with work (Kirkwood, 2009:348; Renko *et al.*, 2012:668; Uddin and Kanti, 2013:148). This implies that for any enterprise to appeal to potential women entrepreneurs, it should include the possibility of satisfying their need for independence.

### ***Need for achievement***

Seventy five percent of the respondents strongly agreed that the need for achievement motivated them to start their own small business, whilst 18.8% agreed. 6.2% of respondents strongly disagreed, while 0% of the respondents disagreed and indifference about these factor respectively. This findings imply that majority ( $75\% + 18.8 = 93.8\%$ ) of women entrepreneurs decided to establish new businesses in order to significantly accomplish their business requirements and otherwise which (women) could achieve in their previous place of work. These factors concur with most studies that argue that need for achievement is a key motive for establishing a new business. The realization of one's self which includes achieving personal vision for the business and the various responsibilities one must learn, through to the challenges of starting and operating a business (Akehurst *et al.*, 2012:2490; Uddin and Kanti, 2013:148). The findings also relates to Abraham Maslow's observation in his theory of motivation, that the need for achievement can be a strong motivation for action (Kaur, 2013:1062). Thus, the

promise of achievement, and a sense of achievement can greatly impact the attitude of entrepreneurs towards their business endeavours, and economic engagements generally.

### ***Wealth creation***

Regarding wealth creation, 43.8% of the respondent strongly agreed that wealth creation is a key motive for establishing a small business and 18.8% respondent agreed. 31.2% of the respondents are indifference of this factor whilst, 6.2 of the respondents disagreed that wealth creation is a key element why they established their small business. Most ( $43.8\% + 18.8\% = 62.6\%$ ) agreed that wealth creation is a vital point for the establishments of their small businesses which is agreement with literature. Stephan *et al.* (2015:15), states that the importance of having financial earnings is essential to individuals/entrepreneurs, this can be achieved through various dimensions such as, thinking outside the box, doing a background check on existing ideas, making sure the competitors version is different from yours and building personal relationships with prospective customers among others. By so doing entrepreneurs are a step above its competitors (Stephan *et al.*, 2015:15).

### ***Flexible work schedule***

Sixty five percent of the respondents strongly agreed that flexible work schedule is one of the key factors women go into entrepreneurship, whilst 18.8% agreed. Ten percent of respondents are indifference about these factors. A total of 6.2% of the respondent strongly disagree that flexible work schedule was a motive for them to start a new business. Majority ( $65\% + 24\% = 89\%$ ) of participants agreed they established a small business have flexible work schedule. In doing so, it gives participants the avenues to balance both family and work. Agreeing to this factor, Buthelezi (2011:39) states that, this factor always accounts for a substantial reason why women in particular go into entrepreneurship in order to gain flexibility in providing for their family needs (Buthelezi, 2011:39). However not all business sectors afford women this opportunity.

Furthermore, these confirm the findings of previous studies that ‘pull’ factors such as the desire for independence, the need for achievement, wealth creation and a flexible work schedule amongst others are often among the first motivation for women to start small businesses (Kirkwood, 2009: 348). Researchers have not given much attention to the question of the presence of gender differences in the push and pull motives of becoming entrepreneurs



(Kirkwood, 2009:34). This is not as a result of omission; rather researchers have focused their attention more on women entrepreneurs as a group rather than on gender, which makes gender comparative research still lagging behind in the entrepreneurship field (Kirkwood, 2009:34).

However women are more influenced by the push than the pull factors, since in Africa women are mostly poor and look to their husband for help for cultural reasons, and cannot depend solely on the income they get from their husbands (Mitchell, 2004:170). Since the man is usually unable to meet all the needs of the family, economic and otherwise, women entrepreneurs seek the opportunity to expand their knowledge and the freedom to control their future (Mitchell, 2004:170). This implies that for many women, rigid work systems are counterproductive. In the long run, they are more likely to be more productive if they are involved in something more flexible. This is an important consideration for legislation and policy making on issues relating to the work life of women.

### ***Job security***

Evident from the findings in table 4.4, job security did not rank high as a motivation for participants to start a new business. A total of 12.5% of sampled women strongly agreed while 6.3% agreed. Fifty percent of sample women - which constitute a high percentage - are indifferent about job security as a motivational factor to start their business. A total of 6.3% of respondents disagree, while 18.7% strongly disagree. This findings concurs with Şenol (2011:34), who stated that job security is an external motivation for individuals to want to remain in their jobs or lack of job security in an establishment may allow one to quit his/her job for another. This finding probably implies that women are more likely to explore new grounds in business, take risks and move outside their comfort zones. These qualities seem to be good qualities for progress in entrepreneurship and, thus, women may be regarded as having a very high chance of being successful entrepreneurs.

### ***Societal and community motivation***

Concerning societal and community motivation, participants agree that their motivation for starting a business stems from the fact they want to be recognized in their various communities and the society at large by ways of social responsibilities. A total of 43.7% of the sampled women agreed, that is 31.3% of respondents strongly agreed plus 12.4% who agreed. Still on the subject matter, 6.3% of sampled women disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed. Majority (50%) of the respondent did not give a direct answer regarding their take on the issue. These findings are in agreement with some studies that suggests most entrepreneurs are motivated to establish their own business in order to give back to their communities through job creation or by being philanthropist (Stephan *et al.*, 2015:16). This also includes social responsibilities (Jayawarna *et al.*, 2011:35).

### ***Status and recognition***

As showed in table 4.4, 6.3% of participants strongly agreed that starting their business has to do with status and recognition whilst 0% agreed. 0% of sample women are neutral on this issue. 56.3% of the respondents disagreed and 37.4% strong disagreed. The views of the majority of sampled women (93.7%) which is (56.3%+37.4%) did not agree that their motivation for establishing their businesses is for status and recognition. These findings are not in agreement with the literature which suggests that entrepreneurs launch businesses in order to gain personal status, respect and recognition among family and friends which extends to the broader community (Akehurst *et al.*, 2012:2490).

### ***Family business***

With regards to family role as a motivation for entrepreneurs to go into business, 12.5% of the respondent strongly agreed whilst 31.3% agreed. Fifty percent of the sampled women did not give a definite answer when asked if their motivation for going into business has to do with fulfilling family obligations. A total of 0% disagreed and 6.2% strongly disagreed. Exactly half - 50% agreed that family responsibility made them go into business. Although the majority 50% are indifferent, it can still be concluded that 43.8% of sampled women agreed that they went into business because it is a family business. These findings concurs with other studies that suggest some businesses are family owned so the motivation stems from joining the family

business in order to continue or take over the family business and in some cases to follow the example of role models (Stephan *et al.*, 2015:15). This means that although individuals make their own decision about venturing into business, the family and its obligations still plays a key role in many cases.

***Challenges (dissatisfaction of previous job for example, need for achievement and need for independence among others).***

Evident from table 4.4, 12.5% of the respondents strongly agreed whilst 0% agreed. Fifty percent of the sampled women are neutral on the issues of challenges encountered from previous job made the established their own business. 18.8% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Challenges from previous jobs may have been daunting but these challenges did not form sufficient reason for moving to the construction industry, participants entered the industry more as a result of aspirations rather than previous job experience.

#### **4.5.1.2 Small businesses offer opportunity to challenge patriarchy**

Patriarchy is the social system in which men almost exclusively hold and control power in most spheres of life (Sultana, 2011:1). The pervasiveness of patriarchy is seen in the exclusion of women in social, political and economic life. The construction industry has been discussed in previous chapters as a good example of a sector, which is male-dominated and in which the exclusion of women is maintained through certain gender stereotypes and beliefs. This includes the perception of women as a weak gender and lacking the strength required for working in the industry. Challenging such perceptions and the entire patriarchal structure emerged in this study as a key motivation for women who established small businesses in the construction industry. The idea that participating in the industry would in itself challenge and subvert the belief that the industry is meant only for men was prevalent in the study. Some of the participants saw their pursuit of business in the industry as motivated by the need to challenge such beliefs and stereotypes about women, which excludes or push them to the margins of the industry. One such participant highlighted that:

*“I decided to start my business in the male-dominated industry because I want to defeat stereotype in the industry... it is not men alone that can succeed in the industry, women also can have a successful career in the construction industry” (Respondent nine (9)).*

Owning small businesses in the industry is perceived as an opportunity to challenge male-dominance in the industry from within and to promote equal opportunities for people of all genders. They want to show that one's performance in the construction industry has nothing to do with one's gender but the required skills and knowledge. Their observation in the industry is that women have been treated as inferiors for no better reason than their gender. Thus, participant five (5) said,

*“I chose the construction industry because I want to develop my community in terms of infrastructure, also because women are being discriminated against... I want to prove men wrong that women can also do a man's job”.*

Thus, for women entrepreneurs in the construction industry, challenging the status quo would eventually lead to transformation of the industry. Indeed, while women noted that they want to transform the industry in terms of gender relations and equity, the change they wish to bring about is not limited to that. They seek to bring about change in the industry as a whole and starting small businesses within the industry offers them the opportunity to do so. The findings implies that, if women entrepreneurs are able to confront the status-quo in the construction industry by breaking down the barriers in order to gain easy entry and run a successful business, this could help in the change led by women. The number of women in the construction industry will increase and eventually the image of industry will be transformed.

According to Global Entrepreneurship monitor (GEM) 2004, entrepreneurial activities that women are involved in are expanding all over the world in the formal sector, and will play even greater role in the informal sector. Women have made contributions from different backgrounds to their environment in the spirit of entrepreneurship. Construction is one industry that has been left out (Arenius *et al.*, 2005:3). Their contribution extends from the economic sphere to include the wider process of social transformation. According to Lincoln (2011:5348), women's productive activity particularly in the construction industry empower them economically and enables them to contribute more to overall development. The author argues that whether they are involved in small and medium scale activities in the formal or informal sector, women entrepreneurial activities are not only a means for economic survival

but also have a positive social repercussion for women in general (Adesua-Lincoln, 2011:5348).

#### **4.5.1.3 The construction industry is also appealing to women**

The dominance of men in the construction industry and the ease with which it passes as an environment fit only for men could also create the impression that the industry is not appealing to women. Any such suggestion or impression is challenged by the findings of this study. The research data revealed different levels of interest in the industry among women from merely being interested and having a desire to explore the industry to having a ‘love’ or ‘passion’ for it. According to respondent sixteen (16):

*“The love and passion I have for the construction industry was my motivation, growing up I loved to do a boys job so I grew up with that mentality”.*

This shows that women also find the industry appealing despite the gendered ideas surrounding it. This has motivated them to establish small businesses within the industry and to seek to grow and develop themselves in and through it.

In addition to the various motivating factors discussed under the above three themes, several other important motivations were highlighted by women entrepreneurs in the construction industry. Although these did not feature as strongly as the ones discussed above, they are worth mentioning. Some women entered the industry in search of work experience, others merely inherited and/or were managing/continuing family businesses, and still others saw it as an opportunity to contribute to the development of their communities. It is also interesting to note that the data showed that a few women saw the absence of women in the construction industry as an opportunity rather than a challenge. This category of respondents who stated that the construction industry is also appealing to women saw the situation of male dominance in the construction industry to mean an absence of competition between men and women thus. For such respondents, this situation translates into opportunities for women. Respondent three (3), for instance, said:

*“I realised that there is low competition between men and women in the construction industry ... men believed that women will not be interested in such a manly industry”.*

While this is an interesting point of view, it does not seem to be consistent with the view that the industry is not for women and the deliberate effort to keep women out of the industry through perpetuation of certain stereotypes. However, given the motivation of women entrepreneurs to challenge such stereotypes and transform the industry, it could be regarded as an opportunity for women. This implies that against the backdrop of the industry women still find the construction industry appealing and wants to make a mark in the industry. This could assist other women in seeing beyond just the image of the industry but also what they stand to achieve being part of the industry.

Several constraints militating against women's entry into the industry range from culture to gender discrimination, poor working conditions, environmental insensitivity and a wide problem with image (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2006: 562). Thus, female entrepreneurs operating in the male-dominated industry encounter intense gender stereotyping and have even greater difficulty accessing formal networks that provides resources and information about the organisation they work in (Coyle and Daniele, 2005:2). In as much as women are being discriminated against in the construction industry, positive progress has been recorded by some women entrepreneurs in South Africa. Accordingly to Ingrid Verwey (2009 cited in Jahn, 2009:15), women are successfully launching careers in the construction industry and even been awarded tenders by the South African government to build 50 houses in Soweto in 2008. This building project was awarded to three women-owned construction firms and the contract was well executed (Jahn, 2009:15).

#### **4.5.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

Participants were asked questions designed to find out whether they believed that women in the construction industry are different from women in other industries, and in what ways. The study went further to find out what, in the opinion of participants, defined a construction industry woman in terms of characteristics. The data shows that most of the participants believe that women in the construction industry are unique and different from women in other industries. For example, for Respondent six (6),

*“Yes women in the construction industry are different from other women in other sectors because the construction industry is known for its male dominance... so for any woman to succeed in the construction industry she must be tough and work extra hard”.*

Participants believed that the construction environment, the male dominance and other peculiar challenges of the industry meant that not every woman would be attracted to it or survive in the industry. For example this would include those wishing to balance family life and work life. Thus, according to Respondent one (1),

*“The ability to balance both family and work is a difficult situation when working in an industry such as construction... More so, having to work on site for long hours, and if the project is far from home, I will always be on the move”.*

In terms of the specific features and characteristic that make women in the industry unique and different from others. The responses are illustrated in Table 4.5 below.

**Table 4.5: Characteristics of women entrepreneurs**

Themes	Frequency of Responses
Independence	10
Drive and energy level	6
Strong	6
Goal oriented	4
Strong will	4
Self-confident	4
Energetic	3
Visionary	1
Determined	1
Emotionally strong	1
Strong character	1
Industrious	1

Participants highlighted several qualities such as: being goal-driven, strong-willed, having drive and energy level, independent, energetic, hardworking, emotionally strong, energetic,

industrious, diverse, ambitious, visionary, goal-oriented, determined and strong character. Participants did not only describe themselves as possessing these qualities, they prescribed these qualities for women who are interested in working and surviving in the industry. According to Respondent four (4):

*“Women working or running small businesses in the construction industry are hard workers and independent... They work tirelessly to get the job done since most men are of the opinion that the industry is not for women, so women in the construction industry make conscious efforts to prove them wrong”.*

Among all these qualities, independence was the most widely mentioned. It appears that by ‘independent’ participant meant self-reliance, and the consequent freedom to run one’s life and make decisions suitable for one rather than being submissive or subjugated to someone else because one is reliant on them. Participants felt that being independent as part of their personality marked them out as fit for the industry. Owning a business within the industry further enhanced that independence and their integrity, as argued by Respondent eight (8):

*“I am independent in carrying out my duties... Men will not look down on women once they know women possess such quality has been independent since they always feel women are not fit for the construction industry”.*

Ranking next to independence, is being motivated. Respondents also believed that being motivated in the sense of being enthusiastic and driven is a key feature of women in the construction industry. This captured in the words of respondent ten (10):

*“...Motivation for me is key...It drives me to want to even do more”.*

Other highly mentioned features include being confident, goal-oriented and strong.

It was observed that in defining whom a ‘construction industry woman’ is, participants named qualities that they thought they themselves possessed. This could imply that the women perceive themselves as the ideal construction industry women, or as possessing the ideal qualities that women in the construction industry should possess. This is probably grounded in the fact that they probably attribute their successes and/or survival in the industry to these qualities. What this means is that a certain discourse, idea or stereotyped exists, at least among these women, about what kind of woman is suited to the industry. The consequence of this is potentially the same as the consequence of the discourses and stereotypes that sustains male



dominance in the industry. Thus, just as the dominant belief that the construction industry is for a particular *gender* (men) excludes women who are perceived to be weak, so also the belief that the industry is for a specific kind of *women* (independent, strong-willed, and so on) could exclude other women who are considered not to have those qualities.

It should be noted, however, that a very small percentage of participants (2 women) believed that there is no difference between the women in the construction industry and other women. One believed that women are generally tough and the other adds that they become stronger and develop some of the stated qualities as a result of the influence of the industry on them after they have joined. Excerpt:

*“Women in the construction industry are not really different... The construction industry has its own culture and that makes women in the construction industry strong and enduring”* (respondent thirteen (13)).

Often, the characteristics of women entrepreneurs are associated with the size of their business, industry sector and the business activity (Tandrayen-Ragoobur and Kasseeah, 2012:438). In order to gain a better understanding the characteristics of women owned small businesses, there is need to take into consideration the various factors that influence a women’s experience ranging from culture, class, educational background, age, and ethnicity (Mathur-Helm, 2010:345). Women in construction are determined and they believe in themselves, the vision they have for their businesses makes them persevere amidst the challenges they face in the industry (Verwey, 2006:13). This could imply that, for women entrepreneurs to successfully operate businesses in the industry, they must possess some characteristics of an “ideal” woman with features including, but not limited to, being confident, eager to work and having strong willpower. This also means that even among women, there is a form of discrimination regarding who is considered suitable for entering the construction industry. Some women who do not possess the required qualities may be declared unfit for the construction industry and thereby excluded.

#### **4.5.3. CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

At the time of data collection respondents were asked to discuss the challenges they faced at start up and the earlier stages of their businesses and then after a few years. Data on the same issue was also collected using a Likert scale table, which was produced from the in-depth

interview guide. Participants were required to select one of five options ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” for each in a list of possible challenges that was discussed. Analysis of the data from both the in-depth interview and the Likert scale table produced suggest that women mostly face sociocultural challenges in the construction industry both at the start-up and later stages of their businesses. Other key challenges were financial, productivity and promotion related.

**Table 4.6: Challenge faced when the business was established**

Themes	Frequency of Responses
Socio-cultural views	12
Male dominance	10
Lack of capital and operating cost	10
Lack of family support/ spouse	9
Stereotyping	9
Balancing family and work	9
Lack of required knowledge/ experience	8
Time management	5
Finding good and competent staff	4
Finding a right location	2
Gaining recognition	1
Establishing a mission and vision	1
Sourcing clients	1
Exhaustion	1

#### **4.5.3.1 Women face primarily sociocultural challenges in the construction industry**

This is the overarching theme that emerged from the data collected for this study. When they (the participants) started their businesses, many of the participants faced challenges that resulted from or are related to male dominance, lack of support for them by their partners and/or family members, gender and other stereotyping, and the difficulty of balancing the management of family and work. All these challenges are regarded as thematically socio-cultural as they stem mainly from social and cultural structures, beliefs, attitudes, systems and

institutions, such as family, patriarchy, gender and culture. Illustrating their experience of these challenges participant six (6) said,

*“Having to deal (with) men in the industry is a very big challenge, I am often reminded that the industry is not for women that I should go and do another business that is associated with women”.*

These factors are interlinked. However, male dominance and control of the industry was more frequently mentioned.

Another very important set of challenges mentioned by participants is financial challenges. Many of the study participants had difficulty raising capital to start their business, as well as raising money to cover the costs of running their businesses. This was a huge setback for many women, such as respondent nine (9), who said,

*“My major challenge was raising funds for the business since I started the business with my saving(s) but it was not enough for the running of the business”.*

Interviewed women revealed their difficulty in securing loans from financial institutions because they did not have the required form of collaterals. Since the industry is known for its massive and expensive equipment, they needed large loans. This made it almost impossible to run successful businesses. Most often, these women outsourced these jobs to other construction firms and this results makes little or no returns on their investment in their business. Most of the respondents also emphasise challenges in emanating from the operating costs of their businesses; they had to pay salaries, machinery maintenance and finance the day to day running of the business amongst other charges.

The other set of challenges, which respondents faced during start-up, were related to productivity and promotion. These challenges are presented in table 4.6 above.

Participants identified certain challenges (table 4.6 above) that hampered their productivity, growth and the attraction of clientele. Some of the specific challenges mentioned include a lack of the required knowledge and experience, lack of – or poor - time management skills, access to good and competent staff, finding the appropriate and strategic location for their businesses, ability to promote themselves and gain recognition, developing an effective mission and vision and sourcing clients. According to respondent ten (10), for instance:

*“Obtaining experience was a major challenge as I did not have any experience in the field of the business I was going into so handling the business independently was a very huge task since I had no required knowledge”.*

And for respondent fourteen (14):

*“Challenges associated with start-up businesses such as the mission and vision of the business, start-up capital, and most importantly finding good and competent staff. Since I had no knowledge of the industry I was going into”.*

Other challenges mentioned, but much less frequently, are the challenge of dealing with competitors and exhaustion. Although the later did not come up strongly in the data, it would seem to be an important challenge considering that the construction industry is male-dominated and women entrepreneurs would have to compete with men who have several advantages within the industry in addition to the fact that the cultural environment generally favours men over women as both literature and the findings of this study indicate. There is a general understanding that men find more favour from society (Mordi *et al.*, 2010:9). The construction industry is a large sector of the economy and it is typically male dominated. This presents a major challenge for equal opportunity for women. And from surveys that have been done, the major challenge is the “image” of the industry (Gale, 1994:4; Sand and Powell, 2012:238).

The data obtained using the Likert scale question/table confirmed the findings from the interviews, and is presented in table 4.7 below.

**Table 4.7: Challenges facing women entrepreneurs**

<b>Challenges faced when the business started</b>	<b>Strongly disagree (1)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly agree (5)</b>
<b>Access to finance</b>	18.7%	0%	12.5%	12.5%	56.3%
<b>Stereotyping</b>	6.2%	6.3%	12.5%	0%	75%
<b>Inability to get support from family and friends</b>	12.4%	6.3%	25%	25%	31.3%
<b>Balancing work and family</b>	6.3%	0%	12.5%	25%	56.3%
<b>Access to human capital</b>	12.5%	12.5%	43.7%	12.5%	18.8%
<b>Low self esteem</b>	6.3%	25%	25%	12.5%	31.3%
<b>Lack of knowledge and experience</b>	6.2%	6.3%	18.7%	12.5%	56.3%
<b>Socio-cultural views</b>	6.1%	0%	6.3%	6.3%	81.3%

Table 4.7 shows a high percentage of participants strongly agreed that the socio-cultural challenges listed were prominent, for instance, stereotyping (75%), socio-cultural views (81.3%) and balancing work and family (56.3%). The data also confirmed other challenges identified in the interview data such as access to finance (56.3%) and lack of relevant knowledge and experience (also 56.3%).

As at the time when data was collected for this study, most of the challenges women faced in the industry were quite similar to, or the same as, those they faced at the point of starting their businesses. Sociocultural challenges such as marginalization of women, male dominance, stereotypes, lack of cooperation from men, women not awarded tenders – especially black women, humiliation of women and the difficulty of balancing family and work were the most frequently discussed challenges by participants. However, the issue of race was not mentioned as a challenge during start-up but is mentioned as a challenge as one participant suggested that ‘black’ women were not given tender opportunities, implying that the situation was different

for white women in the industry. Other challenges faced by women at the time of data collection included financial ones – economic uncertainty such as inflation and productivity challenges. One important challenge was a lack of mentorship for women who are just entering the industry.

The data from the questionnaire, however, suggest that some of the specific challenges faced by women during the start-up period became less important while others gained prominence after some years of establishment. For instance, while 56% strongly agreed that access to finance was a major challenge at start up, 68% of participants considered it a challenge; these statistics are presented as at the time of interview. This shows that access to finance was more of a challenge than it was at the start up time. While 56.3% strongly agreed that lack of knowledge and experience constituted a major challenge when they were starting their businesses, only 37.5% considered it a challenge at the period of interview. This could be a result of having a few years' experience resulting in more opportunities.

This latter data suggest that some challenges faced by women change relative to their growth in business, their experience and conditions of the industry. However, certain challenges did not seem to have changed. These were the stereotyping and socio-cultural views which remained 75% and 81.3% respectively. This implies that if the issue of socio-cultural challenge has not been dealt with.

The result is in agreement with literature that most times women do not want to start businesses due to societal and cultural views regarding the primary occupation of women; staying at home, carrying out domestic duties and the kitchen is regarded as “the place where they are supposed to be” (Okeke, 2000:48; Al-Lamky, 2007:59, Mba, 2015:446). On many work sites, women construction workers are not welcome and are often confronted with discrimination based on gender and anti-feminine attitudes (Buthlezi, 2012:1). Due to this stereotyping women entrepreneurs find it difficult to associate with males in the construction industry, consequently being denied intimate knowledge of the industry. These factors have continued to work against women. It is important to note that in the short term, it is difficult to deal with societal perceptions that negatively affect aspiring women entrepreneurs (O'Neill, 2008:7).

#### **4.5.4 STRATEGIES USED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE**

Since understanding the challenges women face in the construction industry was a major objective, the research also sought to find out how these challenges were managed by the respondents and to investigate their general perceptions of dealing with the challenges. This resulted in a series of questions that were asked in order to obtain relevant data, and the themes that emerged from the analysis of the collected data are discussed below:

##### **4.5.4.1 Women are more likely to succeed if they partner with men and obtain support**

**Table 4.8: How these challenges were been managed**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Frequency of Responses</b>
Partnership with men in the industry	8
Having a good support system (family and friends)	7
Been focused	5
Training	5
Publicity	4
Perseverance	4
Goal oriented	4
Staying positive Self-assertiveness	2
Referrals from satisfied clients	2
Keeping an open mind	2
Strong willed	1
Partnership with NGO's and government agencies	1

The data shows that partnering with men and gaining relevant support are the most important factors that are more likely to bring about success for women entrepreneurs in the construction industry. Partnership with men in the industry was the most frequently named important strategy that helped them to overcome some of the challenges they faced in the industry. It was also the most mentioned strategy, which participants believed would work for other women who are interested in the construction industry. For instance, according to respondent two (2):

*“I am of the opinion that women in the construction industry should form alliance(s) with men in the industry to work as partners, this will help reduce the level of discrimination that women are often exposed to”.*

Participants believed that partnership with men would help women in the industry get tenders. Most respondents spoke bitterly against the way the tenders are awarded, suggesting that women entrepreneurs in the industry are discriminated against, since men are the more advantaged. Men hold prominent positions and are at the hub of affairs in the committees responsible for the awarding of tenders - this allows men the upper hand. Thus, creating a scenario where, as stated by respondent one (1):

*“...Men can go for bidding while women work from the background...”.*

Respondents alluded to some of the tenders awarded to their companies with the help of their male partners who attended the bidding while the women was the silent partner. This agrees with the literature, which says, from a skilled perspective, the idea of women partnering with men is very necessary in gaining easy entrance into any business situation. Nevertheless such partnering is not for social reasons but a strategic option for a conducive, harassment free working environment in the male dominated industry (Godwin *et al.*, 2006: 635; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2013:48).

Since men dominate the construction industry and women have to deal with enormous challenges - many of which are related to male dominance - partnership with men seems to be a very effective strategy. This would allow the women to benefit from the experience, knowledge, control and other advantages associated to men in the industry.

In relation to seeking partnership with men is the idea of support from, amongst others, family and friends. Respondent eleven (11), for instance, suggests the building of:

*“...A good support system involving family, friends, and fellow colleagues”.*

It would be noted that participants particularly cited lack of support from family and friends as an important socio-cultural challenge hindering their progress in the industry, as discussed in the preceding section. Although it appears contradictory that support from family and friends was mentioned as a major challenge and at the same time as a key progress factor, it only goes to show how important obtaining such support is for the survival and growth of women-owned



businesses in the construction industry, and how negatively it can affect them when not available.

Other important strategies that helped women in the industry to overcome their challenges included being focused, getting training, publicity, perseverance, being goal-oriented, self-assertiveness, having a positive attitude, referrals from clients, being open minded, strong-willed and partnership with NGO's and government agencies – with the first five being mentioned not less than four times by participants, and the remainder mentioned only occasionally (Table 4.8).

Although participants attribute their ability to overcome some of their challenges to these factors, they did not mention all of them, as strategies they believed would also work for other women. Among those mentioned in this case are partnership with men, being optimistic, training and workshops, determination, publicity, taking initiative and being focused and goal oriented. This suggests that participants considered certain factors as key based on their experiences, such as partnership with men, which was the most mentioned. This implies that, although they draw on their own experience, they are not prescriptive, and are aware that all women do not face the same challenges or respond to challenges in the same way, thus, their strategies may not necessarily work for every woman. This is captured by respondent five (5)'s observation:

*“We all are not the same, we think and act differently in doing businesses so the strategy I used may or may not work. But in all, every business minded person need to be focused to run a successful business”.*

And according to respondent eight (8),

*“The strategy I used may not work as we all have different ways in running our business, so I will say women should always be optimistic no matter the challenge they face in running their business”.*

#### **4.5.4.2 Passion for, and Knowledge, of the industry will most likely guarantee success**

Having learned what strategies participants have used for their challenges and which they thought could work for other women, participants were taken a step further and asked to suggest strategies they ‘thought’ women from other sectors could adopt to help them deal with the

numerous challenges in the male-dominated industries. Their responses are illustrated in table 4.9 below.

**Table 4.9: Strategies that could be used by women from other sectors**

Themes	Frequency of Responses
Belong to a network of business organization	8
Attending of trainings and workshops	8
Partner with men if in a male dominated industry	6
Partner with other established women in the industry	5
Partner with NGO's	4

Some of the strategies that could be used by women are forming partnership with other established women in the industry, partnering with NGOs and belonging to a network of business organizations. In addition to the above, other strategies include participating in trainings and workshops and partnering with male small business owners were mentioned by the sampled women. Respondent two (2) said that:

*“... Women should belong to women’s network or form a union that support businesses owned by women”.*

According to respondent three (3)

*“Women should go in partnership with men. It worked for me so it should work for other women also”.*

The above findings are in agreement with literature which state that new business ventures can be formed by a team of individuals who come together to create new businesses usually in the form of partnership (Godwin *et al.*, 2006: 626). Studies in the past suggest that ventures created by teams of male and female entrepreneurs tend to have a solid and good foundation. Timmons and Spinelli (2009) are of the opinion that team based ventures are more successful than ventures created by individuals. Kamm *et al.* (1990:10) suggest that “venture capital firms are more likely to consider proposals from team-based ventures rather than from solo entrepreneurs”. Even though these studies were carried in the early nineties, in recent studies this factor has resurfaced (Kamm *et al.* 1990; Timmons and Spinelli, 2009; Brush *et al.* 2014).

#### 4.5.5 ASSISTANCE FOR WOMEN IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

The final objective of this study was to develop an understanding of the kind of assistance that women entrepreneurs in the construction industry believe they would need. Thus, participants were asked questions regarding their awareness of available possible external support, whether or not they have benefitted or are currently benefitting, and how, and whether they were aware of and/or belonged to networks that could benefit them and their businesses. The findings in this regard are first illustrated in table 4.10, thereafter discussed below.

##### 4.5.5.1 Most women entrepreneurs in the industry are aware of availability of support

**Table 4.10: Awareness of government and non-governmental support for women in the construction industry**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Frequency of Responses</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Frequency of Responses</b>
<b>Aware of support initiatives for women</b> (participants mentioned the various support initiatives they know and belong to)		<b>Not aware of support initiative for women</b>	
Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA)	4	Not aware because they have no interest in the support programs	3
Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE)	3		
Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB)	2		
South Africa Women in Construction (SAWIC)	2		
South Africa Women Entrepreneurs Network (SAWEN)	2		
Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)	2		

Out of the sixteen (16) women entrepreneurs interviewed only three declared that they were not aware of support for their businesses because they were not interested in external support. The majority said they were aware of the available external support from government and non-governmental organizations for women in the construction industry. Participants named the different support organizations and structures that they knew. These include: Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) this is a government agency that works with the Department of Trade and Industry. SEDA is required to implement government's small business strategy and design for small businesses to help develop, support and also promote small business in ensuring growth and sustainability in South Africa. Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) is a government policy that concerns itself with the empowerment of black people with particular emphasis on black South African women, youth and people with disabilities, among others. B-BBEE creates strategies to help increase the number of black people that own and manage business.

Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), this establishment is a body that registers all construction organizations. Only when a business is registered with this body will the business owner be able to carry out contract works and be able to apply for tenders. South Africa Women in Construction (SAWIC) is an umbrella body for all women in the construction industry. South Africa Women Entrepreneurs Network (SAWEN) SAWEN is a networking forum for organizations and individuals who are keen in the promotion and improvement of women entrepreneurs and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). This agency is responsible for industrial policy and commercial policy for small scale businesses. The agency also helps in promoting women entrepreneurs whose businesses have growth potential.

The data suggest that SEDA is the most known among participants since it was mentioned by four participants, followed by B-BBEE, mentioned thrice. This is probably because SEDA is a government agency specifically established to help develop, support and also promote small businesses in ensuring growth and sustainability. The B-BBEE program is an initiative designed for black South African women and all participants are black South African women, hence the level of B-BBEE awareness among participants. A priority of the B-BBEE initiative is to help increase the total sum of black South African women who own and manages small businesses.

Participants also agreed that the level of awareness about these organizations and support initiatives needed to be improved. Thus, they suggested that there is need for more publicity

and for these organizations to be more outreaching to women entrepreneurs in order to create more awareness. This implies that if government programs are more outreaching, women within the construction industry will be more aware of support initiatives being organized and by so doing they will be able to overcome some of the challenges experienced in the construction industry.

#### **4.5.5.2 Availability of support for Women**

Participants were not only aware of the available support organisations, most of them had benefitted from these in different ways. Respondents who were aware of, and interested in, such programs had benefitted through trainings and similar programs and in several other ways. Three participants were helped particularly by SAWIC to promote and publicize their businesses. Respondent three (3) was one of them. She said:

*“I have benefited through SAWIC... this body helps in promoting women’s work in the construction industry. Through this body my establishment is known and I am able to get tenders. It has also helped in gaining publicity doing government contracts”.*

The extents to which participants have benefited vary. While some felt that they had benefited much, others felt that they had not because they were not aware of such programs early enough and believed that such organizations need to do more publicizing. Very few participants, however, did not benefit from these initiatives, primarily because they were not interested due to the politics and corruption they believed existed in the organizations and their processes. Respondent four (4) confirms:

*“I have not benefited from any of these programs because I do not show interest. There are lots of politics involved and this are even played by fellow women in the industry even though they are supposed to be helping other women instead they are the stumbling block”.*

Participants also identified three key areas in which their previous involvement with these organizations is helping their businesses as at the time of the interviews. These are: in the generation of business ideas to enhance business growth, which has enabled them to exploit business opportunities and to grow; in the acquisition of relevant business knowledge and skills that promote growth, such as acquisition of finances through loans, the writing of good business plans and proposals; and in the area of publicity. According to respondent two (2):

*“The support programs are really helping my business grow, with the help of the business ideas I get and also how to make use of business opportunities when it arises”.*

#### **4.5.5.3 Networking is an effective business strategy for women in the industry**

Business networks are socioeconomic business activities by which individuals and like-minded businesspersons identify, form or act upon business opportunities (Gursoy *et al.*, 2015:19). Governmental and non-governmental organizations, through their programs, also offer opportunities to entrepreneurs to network and grow their businesses. This study also sought to understand whether participants had developed or belonged to any such business network and how it was helping their businesses.

The majority of participants belonged to different business network organizations. Most of them belong to networks meant for women entrepreneurs generally and not just women in the construction industry. In addition, some participants further belonged to construction industry specific networks. The two that were mentioned include SAWIC and CIBD. These networks provided avenues and the environment for growth for participants' businesses. Some of the benefit include, but are not limited to, getting small cash loans within the organization with no interest on payback or collateral; brainstorming sessions which aid in creating business opportunities; meeting top people in the industry, which help to gain exposure and publicity; and for women who need access to huge amount of loans, these networking organizations act as intermediaries between the financial institutions and the owner/managers in acquiring such loans. Respondent five (5) captures some of these benefits:

*“I belong to a network of women entrepreneurs in all sectors not just the construction industry. It easier to access loans via this organization than through financial institutions”.*

Women entrepreneurs are evolving in the business environment globally. A potential means of increasing the level of entrepreneurship in our society is by way of assisting these women with all necessary forms of support (DTI, 2005:7). Thus, aiding women entrepreneurs in reducing to a minimum the amount of challenges they face in starting and sustaining their businesses is what these network organizations are achieving (Minniti *et al.*, 2004:13).

Three respondents, however, did not belong to any network. Two of them said their businesses already demanded much of their time giving them little space for other activities. Thus, they needed to focus on their businesses. One participant believed that she had sufficient knowledge and contacts to run her business successfully, and therefore, did not need to belong to any network. The implication of these findings is that if women belong to business networks it helps in various ways from brainstorming sessions - that could help positioning their businesses correctly - to meeting potential clients and also create awareness for their business. Thus, associations and networks are an effective means of promoting entrepreneurship among women.

## **4.6 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **4.6.1 Research objective one**

**The first research objective is to identify the factors that motivate women to establish small businesses in the construction industry**

The aim of the objective was to investigate the motivations for women to establish small businesses in the construction industry despite the overwhelming challenges posed by the industry and which they knew was male dominated and not very welcoming to women. The findings reveals that the majority of women desired to empower women as well as themselves. The construction industry is a good example of a sector which is male dominated and in which the exclusion of women is maintained through certain gender stereotypes and beliefs. These include the perception of women as the weaker gender and lacking the strength required for working in the industry. The desire to challenge such perceptions and the entire patriarchal structure also motivated some of the sampled women to establish small businesses in the construction industry.

The idea that participating in the industry would, in itself, challenge and subvert the belief that the industry is meant only for men was prevalent in the study. Some of the participants saw their pursuit of business in the industry as motivated by the need to challenge such beliefs and stereotypes. This particularly includes those that exclude woman or push them to the margins of the industry. Thus, for women entrepreneurs in the construction industry, challenging the status quo could eventually lead to transformation of the industry. Indeed, while women noted that they want to transform the industry in terms of gender relations and equity, the change they wish to bring about is not limited to that. They seek to bring about change in the industry

as a whole and starting a small business within the industry offers them the opportunity to do so.

The dominance of men in the construction industry and the ease with which the industry poses as an environment fit only for men could also create the impression that the industry is not appealing to women. Any such suggestion or impression is challenged by the findings of this study. The research data revealed different levels of interest in the industry among women from merely being interested and having a desire to explore the industry to having a 'love' or 'passion' for industry. The implication for this research objective is this: most women go into the industry as a way of challenging a social structure and in order to explore new avenues and to promote gender parity in the construction industry. This could help in increasing the percentage of women in the construction industry and by extension increase the overall productivity of the construction industry and the country will also benefit from it since it will boost the economy.

#### **4.6.2 Research objective two**

**The second research objective is to investigate the characteristics of women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry**

The purpose of this objective was to find out how women in the construction industry are perceived as being different from women in other industries and in what ways; furthermore, to find out what, in the opinion of participants, defined the characteristics of a construction industry woman. The empirical findings show that most of the participants believe that women in the construction industry are unique and different from women in other industries. Participants also believed that in the construction environment the male dominance and other peculiar challenges of the industry meant that not every woman would be attracted to it or survive in it.

An example of a discouraging feature is the issue of balancing family life and work life. Sampled women highlighted several significant qualities such as: being goal-driven, strong-willed, driven, high energy levels, independent, energetic, hardworking, emotionally strong, industrious, diverse, ambitious, visionary and goal-oriented among other attributes. Participants not only described themselves as possessing these qualities, they prescribed these qualities for women who are interested in working and surviving in the industry.



Further empirical findings revealed that in defining a ‘construction industry woman’, participants named qualities that they thought they, themselves, possessed. This could imply that the women perceive themselves as the ideal construction industry women, or as possessing the ideal qualities that women in the construction industry should possess. This is probably grounded in the fact that they perhaps attribute their successes and/or survival in the industry to these qualities. What this means is that a certain discourse, idea or stereotype exists, at least among these women, about what kind of woman suits the industry. The consequence of this is potentially the same as the consequence of the discourse and stereotypes that sustains male dominance in the industry. Thus, just as the dominant belief that the construction industry is for a particular *gender* (men) and excludes women who are perceived to be weak, so also the belief that the industry is for a specific kind of *woman* (independent, strong-willed, and so on) could exclude other women who are considered not to have those qualities.

Finally, a very small number of participants (2 women) believed that there is no difference between the women in the construction industry and other women. This could imply that, for women entrepreneurs to successfully operate businesses in the industry, they must possess some characteristics of an “ideal” woman with features such as, but not limited to, the following; confident, eagerness to work and strong willpower as well as other attributes. This also means that even among women, there is a form of discrimination regarding whom they consider is suitable for construction industry, as some women who do not possess the appraised qualities may be declared unfit for the construction industry and thereby excluded.

#### **4.6.3 Research objective three**

**The third research objective is to explore the challenges faced by women in the construction industry**

This objective was designed to find out the challenges women entrepreneurs faced at the start-up and earlier stages of their businesses and (as at the time of data collection) – after a few years. The key findings for this objective was when they (the participants) started their businesses, many of the participants faced challenges that resulted from, or are related to, male dominance, lack of support for them by partners and/or family members, gender and other stereotyping, and the difficulty of balancing the management of family and work. Additionally, financial constraints were a major issue. Many of the study participants had difficulty raising

capital to start their business, as well as raising money to cover the cost of running their businesses. Interviewed women revealed their difficulty in securing loans from financial institutions. This made it almost impossible to run successful businesses.

The quantitative data produced from in-depth interviews also suggests that some of the specific challenges faced by women during the start-up period became less important while others gained prominence after some years of establishment. This could imply that over the years participants had become more aware of the nature of the industry and they (the women) has devised ways of sustainability in the construction industry.

#### **4.6.4 Research objective four**

**The fourth research objective is to examine the strategies used by women entrepreneurs to overcome some of the challenges that they face in the construction industry**

Research objective four has two dimensions. Firstly, the strategies used to curtail the challenges posed by the industry. Secondly, if the strategy used could be of help to other women in other male dominated industries. The findings revealed that partnering with men stood out as the most important factor that is most likely to bring about success for women entrepreneurs in the construction industry. It was also the most mentioned strategy that participants believed would work for other women in other male dominated industries. Participants believed that partnership with men would help women in industry get tenders. Most respondents spoke bitterly against the way the tenders are being awarded, suggesting that women entrepreneurs in the industry are discriminated against, since men control the tender award process.

Respondents alluded to some of the tenders awarded to their companies with the help of their male partners since these male partners attended the bidding while the women remained the silent partner. It should be noted that participants particularly named lack of support from family and friends as an important socio-cultural challenge hindering their progress in the industry. It appears contradictory that support from family and friends was mentioned both as a major challenge and at the same as a key progress factor, which illustrates how important obtaining such support is for the survival and growth of women-owned businesses in the construction industry, and how negatively it can affect them when not available.

By implication for women entrepreneurship to gain grounds within the construction industry and other male-dominated industries, women should go into partnership with their male counterpart in the industry in order to run a successful business.

#### **4.6.5 Research objective five**

**The fifth research objective is to understand the form of assistance that women entrepreneurs in the construction industry would need in order to reach their full potentials**

Regarding objective five, the aim was to develop an understanding of the kind of assistance that women entrepreneurs in the construction industry believe they would need for them to fully realise their goals. Out of the sixteen (16) women entrepreneurs interviewed only three declared that they were not aware of support for their businesses because they were not interested in external support. The majority thirteen (13) said they were aware of the available external support from government and non-governmental organizations for women in the construction industry. Participants named the different support organizations and structures that they knew. These include: Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE), the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), South Africa Women in Construction (SAWIC), South Africa Women Entrepreneurs Network (SAWEN) and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The empirical data revealed that most participants were not only aware of support organizations but most of them had benefitted from them in different ways. The extent to which participants benefitted varies. While some felt that they had benefited a lot, others felt that they had not because they were not aware of such programs early enough and believed that such organizations need to do more publicising. Very few participants, however, did not benefit from these initiatives, primarily because they were not interested due to the political association and corruption they believed existed in the organizations and their processes.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations, through different programs, also offer opportunities to entrepreneurs to network and grow their businesses. The majority of participants belonged to different business network organizations. Most of them belong to networks meant for women entrepreneurs generally and not just women in the construction

industry. In addition, some participants further belonged to construction industry specific networks. The two that were mentioned include SAWIC and CIBD. These networks provided avenues and the environment to assist the growth of participants' businesses. By implication, if government and non-government agencies make these support initiatives more accessible, this could help women entrepreneurs reach their full potentials in realizing their dreams of running a successful business in the industry regardless of the male-dominance of the industry.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

The aim of this chapter was to analyse the data and to interpret and discuss the findings of it. The data was collected using in-depth interviews conducted with sixteen women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry. The results were presented using charts, graphs, tables and emerging themes.

The findings established that women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry face challenges in the industry, from lack of capital to under-representation of women in the construction sector. The issue of stereotyping was also raised and lack of not being able to balance both family and work due to the long working hours of the industry. The participants also lamented lack of mentorship, lack of knowledge and experience, socio-cultural views and lack adequate training, these inadequacies are seen as causing barriers for their businesses. However, some strategies were highlighted illustrating how they manage these challenges - as the women mentioned, the challenges cannot be totally eliminated. Most of the respondents were of the opinion that women should go into partnership with the men in the industry while other said having a good support system from family, friends and colleagues could help in managing these challenges.

The aims and objectives of this study can be said to have been achieved since the women interviewed spoke at length about their motives for establishing their businesses in the construction industry, their characteristics, the challenges they face, strategies of managing and coping with these challenges, and finally understanding what type of assistance these women would need to reach their full potential. All these subjects were discussed in detail. Finally, policy makers need to be aware of the specific challenges, motivation and needs of women entrepreneurs in specific industries so as to produce appropriate policies. Such policies for the construction industry needs to take the socio-cultural issue of male dominance seriously and

offer the means to creating a balance by granting more women awareness, access and helping them establish and sustain their businesses.

The following chapter (5) is the last chapter and it summarises all four chapters and also discusses the conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter provides the summary of the four previous chapters and finally presents conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This dissertation sought to address the experiences of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry with a focus on their motivation for starting small businesses in the industry, the challenges they encountered at start-up and then in running their businesses. Then, given the male-dominance of the industry, how they deal with the gender-based challenges, and finally the support they both receive and need to grow amidst the challenges of the construction industry. A non-probability sampling technique known as snowballing was employed in identifying the research participants. In-depth interviews were conducted with sixteen (16) women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

This study is mainly qualitative; however quantitative data was also generated through the in-depth interview guide. Data collected from in-depth interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. The researcher utilised Microsoft Excel software for the purpose of analysing the quantitative data set that was also collected in the course of the study. Both qualitative and quantitative data were triangulated to enhance soundness of findings and validity. This chapter offers a summary of the findings of the analysis, which were presented in detail in the preceding chapter. It begins, however, with a summary of the findings from the researcher's engagement with appropriate literature, which justifies the present study. The chapter, then, makes some conclusions on the study based on the findings, and makes some recommendations.

## 5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE

The study examined previous studies on gender relations generally as well as entrepreneurship and women in the male-dominated construction industry. The key terms and variables in this study were used to structure the literature which was reviewed thematically, thereby, building an underlying foundation for the study and to demonstrate what previous studies have achieved and to uncover under-explored areas.

Previous studies highlighted some limitations. For example, Amaratunga *et al.* (2006) looked at the current status of women in the construction industry to be significantly low, highlighting the major reason as being “difficulty in joining the industry through to capturing the most senior position in the organisational hierarchy” (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2006:559). Another survey looked at the career prospects for women entrepreneurs in the construction industry. Findings for this study revealed the major challenge for women wanting to climb up the ladder in construction to be “gender stereotype which is mostly found in organisations and particular the construction industry since the culture of the construction industry is predominantly male-dominated” (Ginige *et al.*, 2007:8), thus making career development for women challenging.

In a more recent study, Worrall *et al.* (2013) studied the construction industry from the “culture” perspective and alluded to these gender-based characteristics as posing great challenges to women who intend to join the workforce. The findings reveal “inflexible work practices, lack of supportive networks and the male-dominant organisational culture continues to serve as obstacles for women” (Worrall *et al.*, 2013:268). These studies examined the construction industry, mostly examining the problem from a developed-country perspective.

Concentrating on South Africa, Moodley (2012) examined the role of women in the construction industry and observed that it is male-dominated, hence restricting women who are not well received by the males. Although Moodley (2012) alluded to some of the challenges they face in performing their roles, he did not give these challenges extensive consideration, and did not look at women entrepreneurs within the various construction environments. Instead, Moodley focused on women entrepreneurs in the construction industry as a whole. Moreover, he looked at the role of women from a very broad perspective; hence, his suggestion that further studies is required in the context of more specific disciplines and local contexts (Moodley, 2012).

### **5.2.1 Key Findings from literature review**

#### **Findings 1: Motivational factor**

An impressive body of study is in agreement that men and women have similar reasons for establishing their own businesses. However it is suggested that most women are dissatisfied with their career and see entrepreneurship as a means of accommodating both their family commitments and work obligations. Thus, the desire for independence is often regarded as the first motivating factor.

#### **Findings 2: Characteristics of women entrepreneurs**

Entrepreneurs have many unique and individual traits that are identical. These include: optimistic, self-confident, visionaries', moderate risk takers, promoters, tenacious, strong character, networkers, persuasive, tolerant to ambiguity, achievement motivated, and strong work ethic as well as other traits. The attitudes of an entrepreneur are significantly linked to the underlying personal characteristics. Individual attitude towards innovation breeds entrepreneurial success that by extension is achieved through the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics.

#### **Findings 3: Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs**

The literature reviewed showed the inadequate participation of women in the construction industry and that women entrepreneurs find it difficult to start and run small businesses in this industry due to lack of access to finance, gender-stereotyping, the inability to get support from family and friends, balancing work and family, access to human resources, low self-esteem, lack of knowledge (experience), social – cultural views and lack of adequate training amongst other challenges.



#### **Findings 4: Strategies for overcoming some of the challenges**

Studies suggest that women should consider entering into partnerships with men in the construction industry. More so because business relationships formed with the other gender provide a solid background. This can be achieved through collaborating with men and, in so doing, provide the female entrepreneur/s a legitimate place in the construction industry and also gender-related harassments will be curtailed.

#### **Findings 5: Forms of assistance that women entrepreneurs need**

There are general support programmes for both men and women entrepreneurs, although just a few are specific to women entrepreneurs. However they benefit from both support programmes.

Apart from revealing and affirming the fact that women entrepreneurs face numerous challenges in the construction industry, literature also points to the necessity of further and more localised studies on these issues. This study responds to this identified need for more localised studies, and further research into women in male-dominated sectors, by focusing on the experiences of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

### **5.3 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **5.3.1 Findings on background information of respondents**

The majority (56%) of women entrepreneurs were within the age category of 30 – 49 years; this indicated that respondents were relatively young. The majority of interviewed women entrepreneurs had university degrees, which represents 75% of the respondents. However their studies were not in fields related to construction which implies that they have no prior knowledge of the construction industry. The majority of women entrepreneurs, nine (9) respondents, indicated that they had been operating their businesses for 3-5 years (representing 56.2%) which implies that their businesses are still relatively new in the construction industry and their businesses could not be said to be well established, since the estimated survival rate for business start-up in the construction sector is given to be about 4-5 years. Figure 4.4 shows

that majority of respondents 68.7% were engaged in general construction, 25% of respondent were involved in civil engineering, and 6.3% were into pave making. This implies that sampled women carry out reconstruction and renovation jobs as they have no specialized fields as they offer all industry-related services as long as they have the capacity to carry them out.

The pie chart in Figure 4.6 shows that majority (56%) obtained their start-up capital through bank loans, 25% of respondents acquired their capital from personal savings, 13% raised start-up capital through the help of family and government funded programs, 6% acquired their capital through inheritance. The findings imply that financial institutions still offer loans to start-up businesses, this is contrary to those reported in the literatures.

The majority of women had no prior construction industry experience before joining the industry. Those who had were in administration. Administration work allowed these women to gain valuable knowledge about the workings and operations of the industry and how it is managed. This implies that they are positioned to have some knowledge of the workings of the industry which those who have only worked on site would not have. In relation to business growth, the majority of participants had experienced some amount of growth in the past five years, however, the findings shows that the business growth rate is not uniform or stable, this implies that growth rate of their businesses cannot measured equally. It depends on the unique conditions and challenges faced by each individual.

The findings also revealed that, women believe that they have a bright future in the industry and are very optimistic about their chances of future growth. This implies that we should not infer that the sampled women do not have growth plans for their businesses as the findings show us that they envisage a potentially bright future for their businesses. This regardless of whether the individual business currently has potential growth - which literature points to be a lesser concern to the owner manager.

### **5.3.2 Summary of empirical findings of the study relating to research objectives**

#### **Research objective one: To identify the factors that motivate women to establish small businesses in the construction industry**

The findings reveal that a dominating motivating factor for women to enter into the construction industry is the bid to challenge the male dominated industry. The majority of women desired to empower themselves. Some of the participants saw their pursuit of business in the industry as motivated by the need to challenge such beliefs and stereotypes. The desire to challenge such perceptions and the entire patriarchal structure also motivated some of the sampled women to establish small businesses in the construction industry. In addition, while the sampled women noted that they wanted to transform the industry in terms of gender relations and equity, the change they sought to bring about was not limited to that. They sought to bring about change in the industry as a whole and starting a small business within the industry offers them the opportunity to do so. Further empirical findings revealed different levels of interest and motivation for the industry among sampled women ranging from merely being interested and having a desire to explore the industry to having a ‘love’ or ‘passion’ for the industry.

#### **Research objective two: To investigate the characteristics of women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.**

The empirical findings showed that most of the participants believe that women in the construction industry are unique and different from women in other industries. Participants also believed that in the construction industry environment, male dominance and other peculiar challenges of the industry meant that not every woman would be attracted to it or survive in it. Further empirical findings revealed that in defining a ‘construction industry woman’, participants named qualities that they thought they themselves possessed. In other words, for women entrepreneurs to successfully operate businesses in the industry, they must possess some characteristics of an “ideal” woman with features such as but not limited to the following: confidence, eagerness to work and strong willpower. While this is desirable in order to promote gender parity in the construction industry, the manifestations of patriarchy still make it difficult for women to grow and progress in the industry.

**Research objective three: To explore the challenges faced by women in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.**

The key findings for this objective revealed that when participants started their businesses, many of them faced challenges that resulted from or are related to: male dominance, lack of support by partners and/or family members, gender, stereotyping, and the difficulty of balancing the management of family and work. Additionally, financial constraints were a major issue. Many of the study participants had difficulties raising capital to start their business as well as raising money to cover the costs of running their businesses. Further, empirical findings revealed that the interviewed women faced difficulties in securing loans from financial institutions.

**Research objective four: To examine the strategies used by women entrepreneurs to overcome some of the challenges that they face in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.**

Respondents, with time, became more aware of the challenges posed by the industry and as years went by, identified strategies to curtail these challenges. This could imply that over the years participants became more aware of the nature of the industry in which they operated in and they (the women) devised ways of sustenance such as going into partnership with men in the construction industry, having a good support system from both family and friends and also going into partnership with NGO's and government agencies amongst others. Furthermore, the responses of some of the interviewed women reveal some that men can play an important role in assisting women in expanding their businesses, securing sufficient financial backing and sourcing for tenders, when partnering with women.

**Research objective five: To understand the form of assistance that women entrepreneurs in the construction industry need in order to reach their full potential in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.**

The empirical data revealed that most participants were not only aware of support organizations but most of them had benefitted from them in different ways. The extent to which participants benefitted varied. While some felt that they had benefited a lot, others felt that they had not because they were not aware of such programs early enough and believed that such

organizations need to do more awareness campaigns. Additional findings revealed that, in spite of the different available avenues of government funding, most women are reluctant to explore such avenues for a number of reasons. These reasons include among others, corruption, a lot of red tape and the fact that they have to encounter a lot of men in the process, discourages women from exploring such an avenue. Lastly, most women interviewed cited having either requisite educational qualification and or sufficient experience in the industry as an important factor. This implies that motivation to challenge the social structure, education and relevant experience are very important for women who want to go into the construction business.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In line with the findings and responses from sampled women, the following recommendations are suggested;

### **5.4.1 Industry/ Government Training**

- That government should maintain and have available an up-to-date database of women in construction industry as most women do not know that more women are involved.
- An annual report must be given by a government agency, so that the progress of women entrepreneurs can be monitored and also find ways of improving when progress is slow and also investigate the progress of women into the industry.
- Government must consistently communicate with women entrepreneurs in the construction industry by making them aware of the different programs and supports that are available.
- An ongoing advisory council on women in the construction industry should be established. The members should include union leaders, small and large contractors both in the public and private sector and importantly, women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry should be involved in the advisory council board since they are the target population.
- Since women entrepreneurs find it really challenging in balancing both work and family especially nursing mothers, daycare homes should be provided for, these daycare homes should be close to sites or in office buildings where mothers can drop off their kids while at work and check on them from time to time so they do not have to run back home before close of work giving potential accusations of incompetency.

- Finally, government can create incentives for construction firms with child-care facilities and, by so doing, other construction firms will join the league by giving working nursing mothers an opportunity to be closer to their babies even while on duty.

#### **5.4.2 Outdoor campaign**

Construction industry's websites should be designed in such a way that it will portray a women friendly environment with pictures of women working on sites so that it will show that women are not left out in their establishment. Hence, making more women to know that there are establishments that really want to work with women in the construction sector. Companies should promote their establishment as a female-friendly environment that values equal opportunities. This can be achieved by allowing women to give talks at the career fairs; women should be the face of the company even when advertising. Presentations should be given in schools covering women's careers in the construction sector so that from a tender age young girls will know that women are welcomed in the construction sector and by so doing, the number of women gaining entry into the industry is increased.

#### **5.4.3 Professional development**

Women should be guaranteed that there would be a program set aside for career development opportunities when they join any construction organisation not just having them sit in the office. An apprenticeship programs should be promoted for young females who are keen on going into the construction field after their studies so that, while on internship, they will learn more about the industry and make reasonable judgments based on the firsthand experience. A contract must be drawn up and signed between the employer and the intern detailing the job description; it must also include going to work on sites and carrying out duties while on sites not just serving coffee and tea.

Educating women in the construction industry on how to promote their career is very important. To be confident in one's ability and knowledge is essential knowledge. Women in construction should know more than anyone else in the industry; this also applies outside the construction sector, so that they will be taken seriously. Women should pay attention and read extensively about their chosen profession in order to acquire meaningful knowledge. They should attend

seminars and workshops on how to grow their businesses and, join and participate in women's associations.

These trainings, workshops and seminars can be organised by government or non-governmental agencies that supports women entrepreneurial activities.

#### **5.4.4 Professional incentives**

Employing more women on sites will break the stereotype-chain in the industry; most women do not have experience because they have not been employed in construction so they often go out to establish their small business with little or no experience. When women are given the opportunity to work with men in the industry it will help by giving them experience. The number of female workers both working on sites and carrying out administrative duties should be increased reasonably. Women should be offered more leadership positions within the establishment. Most men do not like having a woman as their boss – this can change as evidenced by the progress in the major developed countries. There should be some sort of training and skills workshop at the beginning of the employment contract so that women will know what they are been expected to do when they start the job.

#### **5.4.5 Working in partnership**

Women entrepreneurs in the construction industry should be part of a network of women already in the industry in order to know about the industry and assist each other in the day to day running of their businesses, for example by giving advice on how to apply for tenders, writing a business plan and preparing proposals. Most of the women that were interviewed discussed women being denied tender awards *because they are women*. It is suggested that such women should form partnerships with their male counterparts so that they will be at the forefront when it comes to tenders. Women in construction should work with NGO's so that they will help spread the word around that women can also do jobs just as men in the construction industry. Distributing handbills, posters should be put up promoting women in construction as part of awareness programs.

#### **5.4.6 Funding, mentoring programs and role models**

Government and NGO's should fund an ongoing network of women in construction to help train and support potential women entrepreneurs who wish to establish small businesses in the construction industry and to help fund an annual forum for women in construction in the network. Forums should explore ways to change the mindset of society particularly concerning the misconception that the construction industry is an industry only for men. This will help reduce the gender imbalance in the industry. Programs should be put in place so that the younger generation can benefit from having role models to look up to and help guide them in making decisions about careers in the construction industry.

### **5.5 IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY**

The construction industry is in a strategic place in the economic development of many nations including South Africa. The underrepresentation of women in the construction industry continues to be cause for debate among researchers. When women are given the opportunity, they contribution to the economy and it extends to include the wider process of social transformation.

Women's productive activity particularly in the construction industry empower them economically and enables them to contribute more to the country's overall development. Whether they are involved in small and medium scale activities in the formal or informal sector, women entrepreneurial activities are not only a means for economic survival but also have a positive social repercussion for women in general. Government should set up departments within its already established parastatal such (SEDA and DTI) to look into the issues of women entrepreneurs. Specifically women operating small businesses in the construction industry. Policies should be put in place particularly for women in the construction industry in terms of acquisition of loan either soft or hard loan. Soft loan come in cash while hard loan is in form of trainings, workshops and seminars.

The construction industry is witnessing new entrance of women. Concerns about safety and health are also on the increase. In addition to the primary health and safety measures, specific actions and polices for female construction workers need to be put in place by the government in ensuring their safety. Furthermore, gender awareness should be enhanced in the workplace and also promote an empowering and conducive environment for women in the construction



industry. Policies should be formed to strengthen gender equality in order to curtail the gender-based violence on construction site and workplace. Encouragement and assistance should be given to relevant support groups who provide opportunities for women to operate their small businesses in the construction industry. Barriers to black women advancement should be identified and programmes should be put in place to increase the representation of black women in the construction sector.

Government should put a monitoring body in place to make sure these policies are been implemented and also, an annual report should be prepared in evaluating the affairs of these departments. By implication if these policies are been implemented properly, this will help to increase the percentage of women in the industry and by so doing more women will establish small businesses in the construction sector. These study could assist policy makers in deeper understanding of the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the construction industry.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Although this study has given an idea on the experiences of women entrepreneurs in the construction industry, some limitations are however identified below and these limitations lead into suggestions on future research.

### **5.6.1 Sampling procedure**

The snowball sampling procedure was used in identifying women operating small businesses in the construction industry and this is under the non-probability sampling method. Snowball sampling method is the process of approaching few individuals from the population, these individual then acts as informants and identify other's - such as acquaintances, colleagues or friends. Due to this fact, the sampling technique is weak because of the system of referrals. Therefore, the outcome of the research results cannot be generalised to the entire populace. Though this sampling method helped in providing a lead into the subject matter, it is suggested that other sampling method could be tried, however this may be challenging, as there are no up to date database for women entrepreneurs running small businesses in the construction industry.

Female architects, quantity surveyors and civil engineers were included in the initial targeted respondents. However during the course of the study, the researcher realized the respondents did not include professionals in the fields mentioned above. Most of the women interviewed in the study are employed in site-work in general construction, and are not professionals. The

reason why this may be so could be partly due to the sampling technique used (the snowball sampling method). Another reason is that during the initial data collection process, requests for interviews with the construction professionals were refused. Future research could be done into female professionals in the industry

### **5.6.2 Future Research**

The main focus of this study was on the experience of women entrepreneur operating small businesses in the construction industry. Further studies should be carried out involving both men and women running small business in the construction industry, as both men and women are faced with different experiences in starting a business from the scratch irrespective of the industry. Furthermore, other sectors could be involved such as mining and quarrying where few of women are found. More study sites could be included involving more locations in KwaZulu-Natal and other provinces in South Africa since this study was carried out in Pietermaritzburg.

As a final point, a similar research can be carried out in other African countries to establish whether the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the construction industry are a country based challenge, or is it an industry based challenge. In the long run more literature will be added to the already existing literature and more importantly in the local context where databases covering women are either very limited or do not exist.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

Entrepreneurship play a major role in the job creation and by so doing reduces to a minimum, the number of individuals without paid jobs. Women entrepreneurship continues to speak volumes and this extends from the economic sphere to include the wider process of social transformation. In this regard, it shows that women entrepreneurs are not just undertaking businesses in the traditional industries such as retail stores, fashion designing, teaching among others but are also branching out into the non-traditional industries such as construction, engineering, manufacturing and mining just to mention a few. The challenges posed by these non-traditional industries for women are enormous since these industries are typically male-dominated. Although achievements have been recorded by women who operate in these industries (which have been dominated by men such as the construction industry) there is still a huge level of disparity between men and women in the industry.

The acceptance of more women into the construction industry will help increasing the number of women operating small businesses in the industry, thus creating a friendlier environment for them. This, by implication, will help increase both the total workforce, the successful running of women's businesses in the construction industry and promote an increase in the Gross Domestic product (GDP) of the economy.

Lastly, this chapter provides a summary of empirical and literature findings, recommendations for future research and the implication of this study.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Respondent,

#### **M Com Research Project**

**Researcher:** Evelyn Omayemi Aneke (0726128151)

**Supervisor:** Mrs Evelyn Derera (0332605781)

**Research Office:** Ms P Ximba 031-2603587

I, Evelyn Omayemi Aneke an M. com student in the School of Management, Information Technology and Governance at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled *Investigating a Male-Dominated Space: A Study of Women Entrepreneurs in the Construction Industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa*

The aim of this study is: *To explore the experiences of women entrepreneurs operating small businesses in the construction industry.*

Through your participation I hope *to understand why women entrepreneurs in the construction industry find it challenging in establishing small businesses in the construction industry.* The result of this survey are intended to *contribute positively in closing the gender gap in the construction industry and also help to suggest possible solutions to the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in operating successful businesses in the industry without any form of discrimination.*

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this research project. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the School of Management, Information Technology and Governance, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, please contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above.

It should take you about 30 to 45 minutes. I hope you will take the time to partake in the interview.

Sincerely

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**School of Management, IT and Governance**

**M Com Research Project**

**Researcher:** Evelyn Omayemi Aneke (0726128151)

**Supervisor:** Mrs Evelyn Derera (0332605781)

**Research Office:** Ms P Ximba 031-2603587

**CONSENT**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **APPENDIX B: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

The primary objective of this interview is to know the specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the construction industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. The interview will run for about 30-45 minutes per respondent and will be tape recorded. Thank you for your participation.

#### **Section A: Personal Information**

1. What is your age category?

Under 30 years	
30-49 Years	
50 years and over	

2. What is your highest educational qualification?
3. Do you have any trade specific (professional) qualification?
4. Briefly explain your employment history in the construction industry.
5. How long have you been operating your small business?

#### **Section B: Business Profile**

6. In which category does the business fall within the construction industry?
7. What year was the business established and registered?
8. How did you raise start-up capital for your business?
9. How many employees do you have?
10. Briefly discuss your business growth during the past 5 years in terms of turnover, employees, market share, profit, assets etc.
11. Where do you see your business in the next 5 years?
12. What succession plan do you have for your business?



### **Section C: Motivating factors**

1. Explain what motivated you to start your business in the construction industry?

Using a scale of 1-5 (with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree), please rank the motivation factors that you talked about in terms of their importance to you

### **Section D: Characteristic of women entrepreneurs**

1. What are the characteristics of women operating small business in the construction industry?
2. In your own opinion are women in the construction industry different in terms of character from other women operating business in other sector?

### **Section E: Challenges facing women entrepreneurs**

1. Explain the challenges that you encountered when you started your business?

Using a scale of 1-5 (with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree), could you please rank how these challenges affected you in your business.

2. Please explain the challenges that you are currently facing?

Using a scale of 1-5 (with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree), could you please rank how these challenges are currently affecting your business.

### **Section F: Some strategies needed in overcoming some of the above mentioned challenges**

1. How were you able to overcome these challenges?
2. Do you think the strategies you used would work for other women in the same industry?
3. What other strategies could be used by women from other sectors? Please explain

**Section G: Forms of support do women entrepreneurs need to grow their businesses in the construction industry**

1. Are you aware of any government or non-governmental support for women entrepreneur in the construction industry? (Choose option A or B)

**Option A**

2. If NO, why?
3. How can the situation be improved?

**Option B**

4. If YES, briefly explain them.
  5. Have you benefited from any of these support programs?
  6. How is this support benefiting your business?
- 
7. Do you belong to any networking organization that supports women entrepreneurs in the construction industry? (Choose option A or B).

**Option A**

8. If NO, why?

**Option B**

9. If YES, How is it benefitting to your business?
- 
10. What sort of advice would give to women who seek to establish small business in the construction industry?

**Thank you for your participation!!!**

## APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL LETTER



11 September 2015

Ms Evelyn Omayemi Aneke 213571594  
School of Management, Information Technology and Governance  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Aneke,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0799/014M

New project title: Investigating a Male-dominated Space: A study of Women Entrepreneurs in the Construction Industry in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

### Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 07 September 2015 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in Title

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid until July 2017. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

Professor Urmilla Bob (University Dean of Research)  
On behalf of Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Mrs Evelyn Derera  
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor B McArthur  
cc School Administrator: Ms D Cunynghame

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

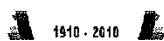
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